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Lafitte's return to the Smoking Room
by Marie Laveau through the Ladies' Ent

Page 1

THE

LIFE AND WORKS

OF

ROBERT BURNS

EDITED BY ROBERT CHAMBERS

REVISED BY

WILLIAM WALLACE

IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOLUME I.

NEW YORK:
LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
1896

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PREFACE.

'THE writings of Burns—his Poems, Songs, and Letters—are most of them so expressly the coinage of his immediate experiences and feelings, that his life might be read in them alone. As hitherto arranged, each series might be likened to a fragmentary view of the Poet's life, supplementary to the meagre memoir usually prefixed. So arranged, the biographic effect of the whole is either imperfectly developed, or lost by dissipation. It occurred to me—and I find that the same idea had latterly occurred to Allan Cunningham—that if the various compositions were strung in strict chronological order upon the memoir, they might be made to render up the whole light which they are qualified to throw upon the history of the life and mental progress of Burns, at the same time that a new significancy was given to them by their being read in connection with the current of events and emotions which led to their production. Such is the plan here adopted, and the result is not merely a great amount of new biographical detail, but a new sense, efficacy, and feeling, in the writings of the Poet himself.' This quotation from the preface to the first edition of Dr Robert Chambers's *Life and Works of Robert Burns* fully explains the spirit in which that work was undertaken, and the plan in accordance with which it was carried out. The forty-five years that have passed since these words were written have signally proved their wisdom.

During his life-time, Dr Chambers accumulated much biographical and other material which, for reasons that the lapse of time has deprived of force, he was unable fully to utilise. The last forty years have also witnessed an extraordinary production of literature relating to the life and works of Burns; as a consequence, several poems and letters of the Poet have been discovered and published. In this connection the gratitude of all lovers and students of Burns is especially due to Mr William Scott Douglas, the editor of the Library edition of the *Works*

(*Poetry and Prose*), and to Mr George A. Aitken, the editor of the third Aldine edition of the *Poetical Works*. Under these circumstances, it has become desirable to issue a new and revised edition of Dr Chambers's work, without departing in any important degree from its original plan. Every effort has been made in this edition to give a reliable text of both poems and letters. As regards the poems, the edition of 1794—the last published during Burns's life-time—is accepted as final and authoritative, so far as the pieces included in it are concerned. Variations from the text are given in notes where this course has been considered desirable; but for the sake of convenience, and on account of their extraordinary number, the great majority of these are reserved for a special appendix attached to each of the four volumes of which this edition will be composed. Poems, songs, and letters which have been discovered by Dr Chambers, Mr Scott Douglas, and others since 1851, are incorporated in this edition, along with such new biographical and historical facts as have been verified. An effort has been made to remove the difficulties that stand in the way of the English reader of Burns, by copious explanatory notes and a full marginal glossary of Scots words. As in the first edition, the poems, the letters, and the biographical narrative are so combined and arranged as to show their relation to one another, to present a view of social life in Scotland during the later half of the eighteenth century, and to illustrate the circumstances in which Burns lived his extraordinary life and did his extraordinary and immortal work.

As the final chapter of the fourth volume will give a critical estimate of Burns's life and work, comment on both during the progress of the book has been reduced to the minimum. For the rest, the golden Cromwellian rule of biography—warts and all, but not warts above all—has been strictly observed.

The first volume of this new edition, which is now given to the public, has been to some extent recast as well as rewritten, and presents several new features. The autobiographic portion of Burns's Letter to Moore, as revised by himself towards the close of his life, and as, therefore, giving his final estimate of his own character and career, is presented in its entirety, and as the opening chapter. The question of the poet's ancestry has been treated at length, both in the text and in an appendix. An attempt has been made to accurately define his theological position; this is supported by a careful analysis of the books which, there is reason to believe, influenced his mind in his early years. Some fresh light is thrown upon his stay in Irvine. The story

of the Buchanites—one of the most extraordinary chapters in the religious history of Scotland—is told at some length, on account of Burns's acquaintanceship with more than one member of the sect. The mystery relating to his intended migration to the West Indies is at last cleared up, and the persons chiefly associated with him in that resolution are identified. Within the past few years much has been written reflecting unfavourably upon the character of Highland Mary—some of it in the shape of direct statement, but more in the form of suggestion and innuendo. In the interests of Burns's memory and of biographical truth, these statements, suggestions, and innuendoes are given in an appendix, and their baselessness is shown.

It will be my duty, in the preface to the final volume of this edition, to express my very great obligations to the gentlemen who are directly associated with me in this work, and the many others who have given me valuable and enthusiastic help. Meanwhile, I have most cordially to thank the proprietors and custodiers of manuscripts, rare editions, and special documents relating to Burns—in particular, the Earl of Rosebery, Sir Charles Tennant, Sir Robert Jardine, Mr A. C. Lamb of Dundee, the Trustees of the Alloway Cottage and Monument, the Committees of the Kilmarnock, Greenock, and Irvine Burns Clubs, and the officials of the British Museum in London, the University Library and National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh, the University and Mitchell Libraries in Glasgow, and the Athenæum and Public Libraries in Liverpool, for the facilities they have so freely afforded for the inspection of the treasures in their possession.

WILLIAM WALLACE.

GLASGOW, *January* 1896.

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Specially reproduced from picture in the National Gallery, Edinburgh.

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MAP OF AYRSHIRE

IN THE TIME OF BURNS.

LIFE AND WORKS

OF

ROBERT BURNS.

CHAPTER I.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

IN the course of his brief, but full and intensely self-conscious life, Robert Burns wrote several fragmentary chapters of autobiography, in the form of letters to friends, common-place books, and journals. Of these, by far the most important is the letter he wrote from Mauchline, on the 2d August 1787, to Dr John Moore, the physician and novelist, who had manifested a warm interest in his works and career. It covers the most important period in Burns's life—from his birth to his '*éclatant* return' to Mauchline from Edinburgh, at the age of twenty-nine. Although written from 'whim,' and to divert his spirits in a 'miserable fog of *ennui*,' it purports to be 'an honest narrative,' and 'a faithful account of what character of man I am, and how I came by that character.' The portion of this letter which is strictly autobiographical runs thus:

'I have not the most distant pretence to what the pye-coated guardians of Escutcheons call a Gentleman. When at Edinburgh last winter, I got acquainted at the Herald's Office; and, looking thro' the granary of honors, I there found almost every name in the kingdom; but for me,

My ancient but ignoble blood
Has crept thro' scoundrels since the flood.

Gules, purpure, argent, &c., quite disowned me. My forefathers rented land of the famous, noble Keiths of Marshal, and had the honor to share their fate. I do not use the word "honor" with any reference to political principles: *loyal* and *disloyal* I take to be merely relative terms in that ancient and formidable court known in this country by the name of "club-law." Those who dare welcome Ruin and shake hands with Infamy, for what they believe sincerely to be the cause of their God or their King, are —as Mark Antony in *Shakespear* says of Brutus and Cassius— "honorable men." I mention this circumstance because it threw my Father on the world at large; where, after many years' wanderings and sojournings, he picked up a pretty large quantity of observation and experience, to which I am indebted for most of my pretensions to Wisdom. I have met with few who understood Men, their manners and their ways, equal to him; but stubborn, ungainly Integrity, and headlong, ungovernable Irascibility, are disqualifying circumstances; consequently, I was born a very poor man's son.

'For the first six or seven years of my life, my Father was gardener to a worthy gentleman of small estate in the neighbourhood of Ayr.* Had my Father continued in that situation, I must have marched off to have been one of the little underlings about a farmhouse; but it was his dearest wish and prayer to have it in his power to keep his children under his own eye, till they could discern between good and evil; so, with the assistance of his generous Master, he ventured on a small farm in that gentleman's estate. At these years, I was by no means a favourite with anybody. I was a good deal noted for a retentive memory, a stubborn, sturdy *something* in my disposition, and an enthusiastic idiot-piety. I say "*idiot*-piety," because I was then but a child. Though I cost the schoolmaster some thrashings, I made an excellent English scholar; and against the years of ten or eleven, I was absolutely a critic in substantives, verbs, and particles. In my infant and boyish days, too, I owed much to an old maid of my mother's, remarkable for her ignorance, credulity, and

* Mr William Fergusson of Doonholm, a retired London physician, who was at that time Provost of Ayr. On this estate, which he had acquired from the town in 1755, and which is now (1896) the property of Lord Blackburn, long one of the most eminent judges in the Court of Appeal, is an avenue of elms, the planting of which is attributed by tradition to William Burnes.

superstition. She had, I suppose, the largest collection in the country, of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, dead-lights, wraiths, apparitions, cantraips, enchanted towers, giants, dragons, and other trumpery. This cultivated the latent seeds of Poesy; but had so strong an effect on my imagination, that to this hour, in my nocturnal rambles, I sometimes keep a sharp look-out in suspicious places; and though nobody can be more sceptical in these matters than I, yet it often takes an effort of philosophy to shake off these idle terrors. The earliest thing of composition that I recollect taking pleasure in, was *The Vision of Mirza*, and a hymn of Addison's, beginning, "How are thy servants blest, O Lord!" I particularly remember one half-stanza which was music to my boyish ears:

> For though in dreadful whirls we hung
> High on the broken wave.

I met with these pieces in Mason's * *English Collection*, one of my school-books. The first two books I ever read in private, and which gave me more pleasure than any two books I ever read again, were *The Life of Hannibal*, and *The History of Sir William Wallace*. Hannibal gave my young ideas such a turn, that I used to strut in raptures up and down after the recruiting drum and bag-pipe, and wish myself tall enough that I might be a soldier; while the story of Wallace poured a Scottish prejudice in my veins, which will boil along there till the flood-gates of life shut in eternal rest.

'Polemical Divinity about this time was putting the country half-mad, and I, ambitious of shining on Sundays, between sermons, in conversation parties, at funerals, &c., in a few years more, used to puzzle Calvinism with so much heat and indiscretion, that I raised a hue-and-cry of heresy against me, which has not ceased to this hour.

'My vicinity to Ayr was of great advantage to me. My social disposition, when not checked by some modification of spited pride,

* 'Mason' is a mis-spelling for 'Masson.' The full title of the book is *A Collection of English Prose and Verse for the Use of Schools*. By Arthur Masson, M.A., late Teacher of Languages in Edinburgh and Aberdeen. An interesting analysis of the volume, under the title of 'Burns's School Reading-book,' is given in *Furth in Field*, a collection of essays on the life, language, and literature of old Scotland, from the pen of 'Hugh Haliburton' (Mr J. Logie Robertson), which was published in 1894.

like our Catechism's definition of Infinitude, was "without bounds or limits." I formed many connexions with other younkers who possessed superior advantages—the youngling actors who were busy with the rehearsal of parts, in which they were shortly to appear on that stage, where, alas! I was destined to drudge behind the scenes. It is not commonly at these green years that the young Noblesse and Gentry have a just sense of the immense distance between them and their ragged play-fellows. It takes a few dashes into the world, to give the young Great Man that proper, decent, unnoticing disregard for the poor, insignificant, stupid devils, the mechanics and peasantry around him, who perhaps were born in the same Village. My young superiors never insulted the clouterly appearance of my plough-boy carcase, the two extremes of which were often exposed to all the inclemencies of all the seasons. They would give me stray volumes of books; among them, even then, I could pick up some observations; and one, whose heart I am sure not even the "Munny Begum's" scenes have tainted, helped me to a little French. Parting with these my young friends and benefactors, as they dropped off for East or West Indies, was often to me a sore affliction; but I was soon called to more serious evils.* My Father's generous Master died; the farm proved a ruinous bargain; and to clench the curse, we fell into the hands of a Factor, who sat for the picture I have drawn of one in my tale of "Twa Dogs." My Father was advanced in life when he married; I was the eldest of seven children; and he, worn out by early hardship, was unfit for labor. My Father's spirit was soon irritated, but not easily broken. There was a freedom in his lease in two

* 'My brother,' says Gilbert Burns, 'seems to set off his early companions in too consequential a manner. The principal acquaintance we had in Ayr, while boys, were four sons of Mr Andrew M'Culloch, a distant relation of my mother's, who kept a tea-shop, and had made a little money in the contraband trade, very common at that time. He died while the boys were young, and my father was nominated one of the tutors. The two eldest were bred shopkeepers; the third, a surgeon; and the youngest, the only surviving one, was bred in a counting-house in Glasgow, where he is now a respectable merchant. I believe all these boys went to the West Indies. Then there were two sons of Dr Malcolm, whom I have mentioned in my letter to Mrs Dunlop. The eldest, a very worthy young man, went to the East Indies, where he had a commission in the army; he is the person whose heart, my brother says, the *Munny Begum's scenes could not corrupt*. The other, by the interest of Lady Wallace, got an ensigncy in a regiment raised by the Duke of Hamilton during the American war. I believe neither of them is now (1797) alive. We also knew the present Dr Paterson of Ayr, and a younger brother of his, now in Jamaica, who were much younger than us. I had almost forgot to mention Dr Charles of Ayr, who was a little older than my brother, and with whom we had a longer and closer intimacy than with any of the others, which did not, however, continue in after-life.'

years more, and to weather these, we retrenched expenses. We lived very poorly. I was a dexterous ploughman for my years, and the next eldest to me was a brother,* who could drive the plough very well, and help me to thrash. A novel-writer might perhaps have viewed these scenes with some satisfaction, but so did not I; my indignation yet boils at [the recollection of] the threatening, insolent epistles from the Scoundrel Tyrant, which used to set us all in tears.

'This kind of life—the cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing toil of a galley-slave—brought me to my sixteenth year; a little before which period I first committed the sin of rhyme. You know our country custom of coupling a man and a woman together as partners in the labors of harvest. In my fifteenth autumn, my partner was a bewitching creature, who just counted an autumn less. My scarcity of English denies me the power of doing her justice in that language, but you know the Scotch idiom —she was a "bonie, sweet, sonsie lass." In short, she, altogether unwittingly to herself, initiated me into a certain delicious passion, which, in spite of acid disappointment, gin-horse prudence, and bookworm philosophy, I hold to be the first of human joys, our chiefest pleasure here below. How she caught the contagion I can't say; you medical folks talk much of infection by breathing the same air, the touch, &c., but I never expressly told her that I loved her. Indeed, I did not well know myself why I liked so much to loiter behind with her, when returning in the evening from our labours; why the tones of her voice made my heart-strings thrill like an Æolian harp; and particularly why my pulse beat such a furious rantann, when I looked and fingered over her hand to pick out the nettle-stings and thistles. Among her other love-inspiring qualifications, she sung sweetly; and 'twas her favourite Scotch reel that I attempted to give an embodied vehicle to in rhyme. I was not so presumptive as to imagine that I could make verses like printed ones, composed by men who had Greek and Latin; but my girl sung a song which was said to be composed by a small country laird's son, on one of his father's maids, with whom he was in love; and I saw no reason why I might not rhyme as well as he; for, excepting smearing sheep and casting peats (his father living in the moors), he had no more

* Gilbert.

scholar-craft than I had. Thus with me began love and poesy, which at times have been my only, and, till within this last twelve months, have been my highest enjoyment.

'My Father struggled on till he reached a freedom in his lease, when he entered on a larger farm, about ten miles farther in the country. The nature of the bargain was such as to throw a little ready money in his hand at the commencement, otherwise the affair would have been impracticable. For four years we lived comfortably here; but a lawsuit between him and his landlord commencing, after three years' tossing and whirling in the vortex of litigation, my Father was just saved from absorption in a jail, by a phthisical consumption, which, after two years' promises, kindly stept in, and snatched him away to "where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest."

'It is during this climacteric that my little story is most eventful. I was, at the beginning of this period, perhaps the most ungainly, awkward being in the parish. No *solitaire* was less acquainted with the ways of the world. My knowledge of ancient story was gathered from Guthrie's and Salmon's *Geographical Grammar;* my knowledge of modern manners, and of literature and criticism, I got from the *Spectator.* These, with Pope's Works, some Plays of Shakespear, Tull and Dickson on Agriculture, *The Pantheon,* Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding,* Stackhouse's *History of the Bible,* Justice's *British Gardener,* Boyle Lectures, Allan Ramsay's Works, Doctor Taylor's *Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin, A Select Collection of English Songs,* and Hervey's *Meditations,* had been the extent of my reading. The *Collection of Songs* was my *vade mecum.* I pored over them driving my cart, or walking to labor, song by song, verse by verse—carefully noting the tender or sublime, from affectation and fustian.* I am convinced I owe much to this for my critic-craft, such as it is.

'In my seventeenth year, to give my manners a brush, I went to a country dancing-school. My Father had an unaccountable

* According to the recollection of Mrs Begg, Burns's youngest sister, he first possessed a copy of the well-known *Tea-Table Miscellany* of Allan Ramsay—a collection of songs, including many by the editor himself. At a later period, he obtained a collection of songs entitled *The Lark.* The Title-page is as follows: '*The Lark, being a Select Collection of the most Celebrated and Newest Songs, Scotch and English.* Edinburgh, printed for W. Gordon, Bookseller in the Parliament Close. 1765.'

antipathy against these meetings, and my going was, what to this hour I repent, in absolute defiance of his commands. My Father, as I said before, was the sport of strong passions; from that instance of rebellion, he took a kind of dislike to me, which, I believe, was one cause of that dissipation which marked my future years. I say dissipation, comparative with the strictness and sobriety of Presbyterian country life; for though the Will-o'-Wisp meteors of thoughtless whim were almost the sole lights of my path, yet early ingrained piety and virtue never failed to point me out the line of innocence. The great misfortune of my life was never to have an aim. I had felt early some stirrings of ambition, but they were the blind gropings of Homer's Cyclops round the walls of his cave. I saw my Father's situation entailed on me perpetual labour. The only two doors by which I could enter the fields of fortune were—the most niggardly economy, or the little chicaning art of bargain-making. The first is so contracted an aperture, I never could squeeze myself into it; the last, I always hated the contamination of its threshold! Thus abandoned of view or aim in life, with a strong appetite for sociability (as well from native hilarity as from a pride of observation and remark), and a constitutional hypochondriac taint which made me fly solitude: add to all these incentives to social life—my reputation for bookish knowledge, a certain wild logical talent, and a strength of thought, something like the rudiments of good sense, made me generally a welcome guest. So 'tis no great wonder that always "where two or three were met together, there was I in the midst of them." But far beyond all the other impulses of my heart, was *un penchant à l'adorable moitié du genre humain.* My heart was completely tinder, and was eternally lighted up by some Goddess or other; and, like every other warfare in this world, I was sometimes crowned with success, and sometimes mortified with defeat. At the plough, scythe, or reap-hook, I feared no competitor, and set want at defiance; and as I never cared farther for any labors than while I was in actual exercise, I spent the evening in the way after my own heart. A country lad seldom carries on an amour without an assisting confidant. I possessed a curiosity, zeal, and intrepid dexterity in these matters which recommended me as a proper second in duels of that kind; and I dare say I felt as much pleasure at being in the secret of half

the amours in the parish, as ever did Premier at knowing the intrigues of half the courts of Europe.

'The very goose-feather in my hand seems instinctively to know the well-worn path of my imagination, the favourite theme of my song, and is with difficulty restrained from giving you a couple of paragraphs on the amours of my compeers, the humble inmates of the farm-house and cottage; but the grave sons of science, ambition, or avarice, baptize these things by the name of follies. To the sons and daughters of labour and poverty they are matters of the most serious nature: to them the ardent hope, the stolen interview, the tender farewell, are the greatest and most delicious part of their enjoyments.

'Another circumstance in my life which made very considerable alterations on my mind and manners was—I spent my seventeenth summer a good distance from home, at a noted school on a smuggling coast, to learn mensuration, surveying, dialling, &c., in which I made a pretty good progress. But I made a greater progress in the knowledge of mankind. The contraband trade was at this time very successful: scenes of swaggering riot and roaring dissipation were as yet new to me, and I was no enemy to social life. Here, though I learnt to look unconcernedly on a large tavern-bill, and mix without fear in a drunken squabble, yet I went on with a high hand in my geometry, till the sun entered Virgo, a month which is always a carnival in my bosom: a charming *Fillette*, who lived next door to the school, overset my trigonometry, and set me off in a tangent from the spheres of my studies. I struggled on with my sines and co-sines for a few days more; but stepping out to the garden one charming noon to take the sun's altitude, I met with my angel—

> Like Proserpine, gathering flowers,
> Herself a fairer flower.——

It was in vain to think of doing any more good at school. The remaining week I staid I did nothing but craze the faculties of my soul about her, or steal out to meet with her; and the two last nights of my stay in the country, had sleep been a mortal sin, I was innocent.

'I returned home very considerably improved. My reading was enlarged with the very important addition of Thomson's and

Shenstone's Works. I had seen mankind in a new phasis; and I engaged several of my schoolfellows to keep up a literary correspondence with me. I had met with a collection of letters by the wits of Queen Anne's reign, and I pored over them most devoutly. I kept copies of any of my own letters that pleased me, and a comparison between them and the composition of most of my correspondents flattered my vanity. I carried this whim so far, that though I had not three-farthings' worth of business in the world, yet every post brought me as many letters as if I had been a broad plodding son of day-book and ledger.

'My life flowed on much in the same tenor till my twenty-third year. *Vive l'amour, et vive la bagatelle*, were my sole principles of action. The addition of two more authors to my library gave me great pleasure; Sterne and Mackenzie—*Tristram Shandy* and *The Man of Feeling*—were my bosom favourites.

'Poesy was still a darling walk for my mind, but 'twas only the humour of the hour. I had usually half-a-dozen or more pieces on hand; I took up one or other as it suited the momentary tone of the mind, and dismissed it as it bordered on fatigue. My passions, when once they were lighted up, raged like so many devils till they got vent in rhyme; and then conning over my verses, like a spell, soothed all into quiet! None of the rhymes of those days are in print, except "Winter, a dirge" (the eldest of my printed pieces), "The Death and Dying Words of Poor Mailie," "John Barleycorn," and Songs first, and second, and third. Song second was the ebullition of that passion which ended the forementioned school-business.

'My twenty-third year was to me an important æra. Partly through whim, and partly that I wished to set about doing something in life, I joined with a flax-dresser in a neighbouring country town, to learn his trade, and carry on the business of manufacturing and retailing flax. This turned out a sadly unlucky affair. My partner was a scoundrel of the first water, who made money by the mystery of Thieving, and to finish the whole, while we were giving a welcome carousal to the New Year, our shop, by the drunken carelessness of my partner's wife, took fire, and burned to ashes, and I was left, like a true poet, not worth sixpence. I was obliged to give up business; the clouds of misfortune were gathering thick round my Father's head; the darkest of which was

—he was visibly far gone in a consumption. To crown all, a *belle fille* whom I adored, and who had pledged her soul to meet me in the fields of matrimony, jilted me, with peculiar circumstances of mortification. The finishing evil that brought up the rear of this infernal file, was my hypochondriac complaint being irritated to such a degree, that for three months I was in a diseased state of body and mind, scarcely to be envied by the hopeless wretches who have just got their sentence, "Depart from me, ye cursed! &c."

'From this adventure I learned something of a Town life; but the principal thing which gave my mind a turn was—I formed a bosom friendship with a young fellow,* the *first* created being I had ever seen, but a hapless son of misfortune. He was the son of a plain mechanic; but a great man in the neighbourhood taking him under his patronage, gave him a genteel education, with a view to bettering his situation in life. The patron dying, and leaving my friend unprovided for, just as he was ready to launch forth into the world, the poor fellow, in despair, went to sea; where, after a variety of good and bad fortune, he was, a little before I was acquainted with him, set a-shore by an American privateer, on the wild coast of Connaught, stript of everything. I cannot quit this poor fellow's story without adding, that he is at this moment Captain of a large West Indiaman belonging to the Thames.

'This gentleman's mind was fraught with courage, independence, and magnanimity, and every noble, manly virtue. I loved him; I admired him to a degree of enthusiasm, and I strove to imitate him. I in some measure succeeded; I had the pride before, but he taught it to flow in proper channels. His knowledge of the world was vastly superior to mine, and I was all attention to learn. He was the only man I ever saw who was a greater fool than myself when Woman was the presiding star; but he spoke of a certain fashionable failing with levity, which hitherto I had regarded with horror. Here his friendship did me a mischief, and the consequence was, that soon after I resumed the plough I wrote the enclosed "Welcome."

'My reading was only increased by two stray volumes of *Pamela*, and one of *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, which gave me some idea of novels. Rhyme, except some religious pieces which

* Richard Brown, afterwards one of Burns's correspondents.

are in print, I had given up; but meeting with Fergusson's *Scotch Poems*, I strung anew my wildly-sounding, rustic lyre with emulating vigour. When my Father died, his all went among the rapacious hell-hounds that growl in the Kennel of Justice; but we made a shift to scrape a little money in the family amongst us, with which (to keep us together) my brother and I took a neighbouring farm. My brother wanted my hare-brained imagination, as well as my social and amorous madness; but in good sense, and every sober qualification, he was far my superior.

'I entered on this farm with a full resolution "Come, go to, I will be wise!" I read farming books, I calculated crops; I attended markets; and in short, in spite of the devil, the world, and the flesh, I believe I should have been a wise man; but the first year, from unfortunately buying in bad seed; the second, from a late harvest, we lost half of both our crops. This overset all my wisdom, and I returned, "like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire." I now began to be known in the neighbourhood as a maker of rhymes. The first of my poetic offspring that saw the light was a burlesque lamentation on a quarrel between two Reverend Calvinists, both of them *dramatis personæ* in my "Holy Fair." I had an idea myself that the piece had some merits; but, to prevent the worst, I gave a copy of it to a friend who was very fond of these things, and told him I could not guess who was the author of it, but that I thought it pretty clever. With a certain side of both clergy and laity, it met with a roar of applause. "Holy Willie's Prayer" next made its appearance, and alarmed the kirk-session so much, that they held three several meetings to look over their holy artillery, if any of it was pointed against profane rhymers. Unluckily for me, my idle wanderings led me on another side, point-blank, within reach of their heaviest metal. This is the unfortunate story alluded to in my printed poem, "The Lament." 'Twas a shocking affair, which I cannot yet bear to recollect, and it had very nearly given me one or two of the principal qualifications for a place among those who have lost the chart, and mistaken the reckoning, of rationality. I gave up my part of the farm to my brother; as in truth it was only nominally mine (for stock I had none to embark in it), and made what little

preparation was in my power for Jamaica. Before leaving my native country, however, I resolved to publish my poems. I weighed my productions as impartially as in my power; I thought they had merit; and 'twas a delicious idea that I should be called a clever fellow, even tho' it should never reach my ears—a poor negro-driver—or perhaps gone to the world of spirits, a victim to that inhospitable clime. I can truly say, that *pauvre inconnu* as I then was, I had pretty nearly as high an idea of myself and my works as I have at this moment. It was ever my opinion that the great, unhappy mistakes and blunders, both in a rational and religious point of view, of which we see thousands daily guilty, are owing to their ignorance or mistaken notions of themselves. To know myself, had been all along my constant study. I weighed myself, alone; I balanced myself with others; I watched every means of information, how much ground I occupied as a man and as a poet; I studied assiduously Nature's design, where she seemed to have intended the various *lights* and *shades* in my character. I was pretty sure my poems would meet with some applause; but at the worst, the roar of the Atlantic would deafen the voice of Censure, and the novelty of West Indian scenes would make me forget Neglect. I threw off six hundred copies, of which I had got subscriptions for about three hundred and fifty. My vanity was highly gratified by the reception I met with from the public; besides pocketing (all expenses deducted) near twenty pounds. This last came very seasonably, as I was about to indent myself, for want of money to pay my freight. So soon as I was master of nine guineas, the price of wafting me to the Torrid Zone, I bespoke a passage in the very first Ship that was to sail, for

Hungry ruin had me in the wind.

'I had for some time been skulking from covert to covert, under all the terrors of a jail; as some ill-advised, ungrateful people had uncoupled the merciless legal pack at my heels. I had taken the last farewell of my few friends; my chest was on the road to Greenock; I had composed a song, "The gloomy night is gathering fast," which was to be the last effort of my muse in Caledonia, when a letter from Dr Blacklock to a friend of mine overthrew all my schemes, by rousing my poetic ambition. The

Doctor belonged to a class of critics for whose applause I had not even dared to hope. His idea, that I would meet with every encouragement for a second edition, fired me so much that away I posted for Edinburgh, without a single acquaintance in town, or a single letter of recommendation in my pocket. The baneful star that had so long presided in my Zenith, for once made a revolution to the Nadir; and the providential care of a good God placed me under the patronage of one of his noblest creatures, the Earl of Glencairn. "*Oubliez moi, grand Dieu, si jamais je l'oublie!*"

'I need relate no farther. At Edinburgh I was in a new world; I mingled among many classes of men, but all of them new to me, and I was all attention to "catch the manners living as they rise."

'You can now, Sir, form a pretty near guess of what sort of Wight he is, whom for some time you have honored with your correspondence. That Whim and Fancy, keen sensibility and riotous passions, may still make him zig-zag in his future path of life, is very probable; but, come what will, I shall answer for him—the most determinate integrity and honor [shall ever characterise him]; and though his evil star should again blaze in his meridian with tenfold more direful influence, he may reluctantly tax friendship with pity, but no more.'

CHAPTER II.

BIRTH AND ANCESTRY.

A LITTLE over two miles from the town of Ayr, on the highroad to Maybole, there still stands, in the village of Alloway, the two-roomed cottage in which Robert Burns was born, on the 25th of January 1759. Ayr, with its population of 25,000, is at present one of the largest and most prosperous of the county towns of Scotland. Four years before Burns's birth its population was returned at 2964. The district in its immediate vicinity, which includes Alloway, is at the present time in a state of high cultivation. It was not always so. 'Alloway' is said to be a word of Celtic origin, and to mean 'barren place.' In 1690, the parish was almost entirely covered with furze and heath. No doubt, however, when William Burnes took a lease of seven acres of land in Alloway, intending to carry on business as a nurseryman, and built the clay cottage in which his eldest son was born, the plough had worked wonders. In natural beauty, at all events, the native country of Burns remains what it was. Now, as in 1759, there rises from the southern bank of the Doon, and within a short distance of Alloway village, the Brown Carrick Hill, commanding views of the Firth of Clyde, with the Mull of Cantyre, the Heads of Ayr, the hills of Arran, and Ailsa Craig, and of the fertile Ayrshire districts of Kyle and Cunningham, with their seaports of Ayr, Irvine, Troon, and Ardrossan. Unfortunate in so many respects, Burns was eminently fortunate in the region of his birth.

On the side of both father and mother, Burns belonged to the

class of substantial Scottish husbandmen or yeomen. His father, William Burnes,* was the son of Robert Burnes, who was tenant, first of the farm of Kinmouth, in Glenbervie, and subsequently of the farm of Clochnahill, in Dunnottar, Kincardineshire. According to *Notes on his Name and Family*, which was privately printed in 1851 by Dr James Burnes, of Montrose, some time Physician-General of the Bombay Army, this Robert Burnes and his four brothers were sufficiently wealthy, about the year 1700, to be able to show silver utensils at their table. Tradition has it that he and some of his neighbours built on his farm the first school that the district had ever boasted of, and united to support its teacher. The poet's mother, Agnes Broun, was the daughter of Gilbert Brown or Broun (spelt Broun on the family tombstone), who, with several brothers, occupied the farm of Craigenton (or Craiginton), Kirkoswald, Ayrshire, extending to about three hundred acres.

Burns believed that he had both Jacobite and Covenanting blood in his veins. 'My forefathers,' he says in his autobiography, 'rented land of the famous, noble Keiths of Marshal, and had the honor to share their fate.' In his address to William Tytler, he says, speaking of the name of Stuart,

> My fathers that name have rever'd on a throne:
> My fathers have fallen to right it.

In 1789 he wrote to Lady Winifred Maxwell Constable, 'Though my fathers had not illustrious honors and vast properties to hazard in the contest—though they left their humble cottages only to add so many units more to the unnoted crowd that followed their leaders—yet what they could they did, and what they had they lost.' But the most explicit statement made by Burns on the subject of his ancestry is that recorded by John

* The poet's birth is thus entered in the session books of the then conjunct parishes of Ayr and Alloway: 'Robert Burns, lawful son of William Burns in Alloway and Agnes Broun his spouse, was born January 25th, 1759; baptised by Mr William Dalrymple. Witnesses, John Tennant and James Young.' It is interesting to note that the name is here spelt as Robert and Gilbert Burns agreed to spell it in April 1786. The generally accepted explanation is that it was thus spelt in Ayrshire, in accordance with the local pronunciation. Burns's father invariably signed his name 'Burnes,' like the Clochnahill family generally, as demonstrated by the Parish Register of Dunnottar. It is spelt 'Burness' on the tombstone in Alloway Churchyard, and in the Family Register. But at the time this entry was made, 13th February 1784, the poet was signing his own name 'Robert Burness.'

Ramsay of Ochtertyre, whom he visited in 1787. Ramsay* says, 'That poor man's principles were abundantly motley, he being a Jacobite, an Arminian, and a Socinian. The first, he said, was owing to his grandfather having been plundered and driven out in the year 1715, when gardener to Earl Marischal at Inverury; the second, to his great-grandfather, by the mother, having been shot at Airds Moss while with the Covenanters.' This is in some respects an obscure statement, reflecting confusion in the mind either of Burns or of Ramsay. What are popularly known as Arminian opinions could scarcely be derived from a Covenanting ancestor; and by 'Inverury' is no doubt meant Inverugie Castle, near Peterhead, Earl Marischal's Aberdeenshire seat. But there is abundance of evidence that the Ayrshire Brouns, with their connections the Rennies and the M'Greans, were warm adherents of the Covenant; and it is at least possible that some of them suffered for it. The poet's statement that his grandfather was 'plundered and driven out' in 1715, when gardener to the Earl Marischal, gives precision to the declaration made in the letter to Moore as to his forefathers having shared the fate of the Keiths, although at first sight it seems hard to reconcile with the evidence adduced by Dr James Burnes as to the comparative wealth of Robert Burnes and his brothers in 1700. It is otherwise not incredible that Robert Burnes left the farm he occupied in Kincardineshire to be gardener to Earl Marischal at the latter's Aberdeenshire castle, and afterwards returned to Clochnahill. There is undoubted evidence as to the interchange of servants between the two residences of Earl Marischal at the beginning of the eighteenth century. It is beyond question that the Earl raised a regiment for the Chevalier in conjunction with Stuart of Inchbreck, proprietor of Bralinmuir, of which James Burnes, father of Robert of Clochnahill, was tenant, and the latter, whether as farmer or as servant, was bound, and could have been forced, to join it. It has, indeed, been pointed out that although the majority of the Burneses in Kincardineshire were Episcopalians, the names of the children of Robert of Clochnahill, from 1725 to 1732, are registered as having been baptised by the minister of his parish, that this is evidence

* *Scotland and Scotsmen in the Eighteenth Century, from the MSS. of John Ramsay, Esq. of Ochtertyre.* Edited by Alexander Allardyce. (William Blackwood & Sons, 2 vols., 1888.)

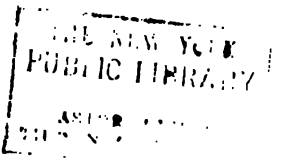
of his having been Presbyterian, and that it is quite certain his brother James, who succeeded to the tenancy of Bralinmuir, was in 1723 an elder in the parish of Glenbervie. But it is possible that, although the Burneses found it expedient to conform to Presbyterianism and accept the Hanoverian rule after 1715, they may have been Jacobites and Episcopalians before and during the Rebellion. Even if they were Presbyterians, they might have been compelled to join the standard of Earl Marischal and Stuart of Inchbreck, by such a threat as Lord Mar held over the heads of his tenants in Kildrummy in September 1715, when he warned them, through his bailie, that if 'they came not forth in their best arms,' he would send a party immediately to burn their homesteads.

The whole truth in regard to the Jacobitism of Burns's ancestors will probably never be ascertained. But it may be assumed as certain that William Burnes believed his father to have been out in the '15, and confided his belief to his eldest son. He may not have been so communicative to his second son, Gilbert, who does not appear to have had any sympathy with Jacobitism, and who induced Dr Currie to delete from the letter to Moore the poet's allusion to his forefathers having shared the fate of the Keiths. Gilbert says, 'I believe the Earl Marischal forfeited his title and estates in 1715, before my father was born; and among a collection of parish certificates in his possession I have read one stating that the bearer had no concern in the late wicked rebellion.' Here Gilbert contradicts what was never asserted, and is otherwise misleading. His brother spoke, not of his father, but of his 'forefathers,' having shared the fate of the Keiths, and 'the late wicked rebellion,' alluded to in the certificate mentioned by Gilbert, was the rising, not of 1715, but of 1745. There is no direct evidence to connect the Burneses with the second Jacobite failure. It is true that although Stuart of Inchbreck did not throw in his lot with the Young Pretender, his brother, Captain Stuart, did, and he may have induced some of the Inchbreck tenants to join him. On the other hand, there has long been in the possession of the descendants of Gilbert Burns a certificate, dated 9th May 1748, granted to William Burnes by three landowners in Kincardineshire, testifying that the bearer 'is the son of an honest farmer in this neighbourhood, and is a very well-inclined lad himself.' This document, which is probably

the certificate mentioned by Gilbert to Dr Currie, would seem to be intended to convey the impression that both William Burnes and his father, the 'honest farmer,' had no part in the '45. At that time, indeed, Robert Burnes of Clochnahill appears to have been so embarrassed financially that it is scarcely possible to conceive of him taking an active part in a political intrigue or a military rising. In 1740 great distress prevailed among farmers in the north of Scotland, as a consequence of an inclement winter and spring, and Robert Burnes would appear to have suffered like others. There is, at all events, almost conclusive evidence that he and his second son, Robert, borrowed about this time a considerable sum of money from Provost Stuart of Aberdeen, the younger son of the laird of Inchbreck. In spite—or because—of such difficulties, he appears to have, in 1745, extended his farming operations, possibly in the vague hope of thereby extricating himself. In addition to Clochnahill, he took a seven years' lease, from George Kinloch of Kair, of 'the towns and lands' of Fallside and Braiks, Dunnottar. It would appear, however, that he was unable to pay any rent, for, on the 13th December 1746, he had to give Kinloch a promissory note for upwards of £155. This was protested for non-payment on August 3, 1747. Finally, Robert Burnes was compelled to quit his farms, and went to reside at Denside, Dunnottar.

William Burnes was born at Clochnahill, on 11th November 1721. He was the third * son of his father, and appears to have been bred to the business of a gardener. According to one tradition, he was apprenticed to the gardener at Monboddo; according to another, he was apprenticed, about the year 1740, to the gardener of Sir William Nicolson of Glenbervie, and remained in his employment for five years. It is also stated that in 1747 he applied for, and was refused, a renewal of the tack of his father's farm of Clochnahill. It seems certain, however, that in the year 1748, as has already been mentioned, he left Kincardineshire with his brother Robert to seek work as a gardener in the south. 'I

* His eldest brother, James, born in 1717, settled as a wright in Montrose, and became a town councillor, and an elder of the Established Church. His son James, with whom the poet corresponded, practised as a writer in the same town. He was the grandfather of Sir Alexander Burnes, the traveller and diplomatist, who, with his brother Charles, was murdered at Cabul, in November 1841, during an insurrection organised in the interest of Dost Mohammed, the rival of Shah Shuja, and of Dr James Burnes of the Bombay army, to whom allusion has already been made. The second brother, Robert, born in 1719, tried his fortune as a gardener in England, but with indifferent success, and died in 1789.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DAVIES STRAND LONDON.

have often,' says Gilbert, 'heard my father describe the anguish of mind he felt when he parted with his elder brother Robert on the top of a hill, on the confines of their native place, each going off his several way in search of new adventures, and scarcely knowing whither he went. My father,' he adds, 'undertook to act as a gardener, and shaped his course to Edinburgh, where he wrought hard when he could get work, passing through a variety of difficulties. Still, however, he endeavoured to spare something for the support of his aged parents; and I recollect hearing him mention his having sent a bank-note for this purpose, when money of that kind was so scarce in Kincardineshire that they scarcely knew how to employ it when it arrived.'*

It appears to be beyond question that William Burnes took part in laying out the Hope Park, in the south side of Edinburgh. This was probably about 1749. Next year he migrated to Ayrshire, having accepted the post of gardener on the estate of Fairlie, in the parish of Dundonald. In 1752 he accepted a similar post under Mr Crawford of Doonside. Finally, according to John Murdoch, whom he subsequently employed to teach his children, he 'was afterwards employed as a gardener and overseer' by Provost Fergusson of Doonholm, in the parish of Alloway.

While still remaining in the service of Provost Fergusson, he took a lease of seven acres of land near the Bridge of Doon, from Dr Campbell, of Ayr, designing to carry on business as a nurseryman and market-gardener. On this ground he built a clay cottage with his own hands. According to his Family Bible, he and Agnes Broun, who was eleven years younger than himself, were 'married together, 15th December 1757.' They at once took up their residence in the clay cottage, where,† thirteen months later, their first child was born.

* See Appendix I.

† William Burnes retained the cottage, with its feu-duties, till 1781, when he sold them for a small sum to the Ayr Corporation of Shoemakers. For many years it was used as a village ale-house; and in 1847 the Corporation built a hall at the back of the cottage, for the preservation of manuscripts and other relics of the poet, and for the holding of anniversary celebrations on the 25th of January. In 1881, the cottage and the relics were acquired for £4000, 'to be preserved in the interests and for behoof of the public,' by the Trustees of the Monument which was erected to the memory of Burns in 1823, on the north bank of the Doon, close to the old bridge. The trustees are the Lord-lieutenant, Vice-lieutenant, Sheriff, and Convener of the County of Ayr, the Provost of the Burgh, and the members of parliament for North and South Ayrshire and the Ayr Burghs. While still open to the public, the cottage has, since 1881, ceased to be used as an ale-house.

CHAPTER III.

ALLOWAY AND MOUNT OLIPHANT (1759–1776).

GILBERT BURNS related to Dr Currie a circumstance attending the birth of the poet. 'When my father,' he says, 'built his clay bigging, he put in two stone jambs, as they are called, and a lintel, carrying up a chimney in his clay gable. The consequence was, that as the gable subsided, the jambs, remaining firm, threw it off its centre; and one very stormy morning, when my brother was nine or ten days old, a little before daylight a part of the gable fell out, and the rest appeared so shattered, that my mother, with the young poet, had to be carried through the storm to a neighbour's house, where they remained a week, till their own dwelling was adjusted.' Gilbert adds: 'That you may not think too meanly of this house, or my father's taste in building, by supposing the poet's description in "The Vision" (which is entirely a fancy picture) applicable to it, allow me to take notice to you that the house consisted of a kitchen in one end and a room in the other, with a fireplace and chimney; that my father had constructed a concealed bed in the kitchen, with a small closet at the end, of the same materials with the house; and when altogether cast over, outside and in, with lime, it had a neat, comfortable appearance, such as no family of the same rank, in the present improved style of living, would think themselves ill lodged in.'

William Burnes, himself a man of character and intelligence,*

* The following letter, the original of which is preserved in the monument to the poet in Edinburgh, is interesting as giving the only authentic account of the Burnes household, by its head, that is extant:

'TO MR JAMES BURNES, MONTROSE.

'DEAR NEPHEW,—I received your affectionate letter by the bearer, who came 5 miles with it to my house. I received [it] with the same warmth you wrott it, and I am extremely

was anxious that his children should have the best education he could give them. Robert was therefore sent, in his sixth year, to a little school at Alloway Mill, about a mile from the cottage, and taught, according to tradition, by a Mr Campbell. Not long after, his father took the lead in establishing a young teacher, named John Murdoch,* in a room in the village, and there Robert and his younger brother Gilbert attended for some time. It will have been observed that the poet, in his own narrative, passes over his school attendance with slight notice, in comparison with the legendary lore he gathered from the old woman who resided in the family.† Gilbert has been more communicative. Referring to Murdoch, in a letter addressed to Dr Currie, he says: 'With him we learned to read English tolerably well, and to write a little. He taught us, too, the English grammar. I was too young to profit much from his lessons in grammar, but Robert made some proficiency in it; a circumstance of considerable weight in the unfolding of his genius and character, as he soon became remarkable for the fluency and correctness of his expression, and read the few books that came in his way with much pleasure and improvement; for even then he was a reader when he could get a book. Murdoch, whose library at that time had no great

glad you express yourself with so warm regard for your parents and friends. I wish much Joy in your wife and child. I should have been glad had you sent me their names, with the name of your brother-in-law.

'I have a family of four sons and three douthers: two of my sons and two of my douthers are men and women, and all with me in the farm-way: I have the happiness to hope they are virtuously inclined; my youngest douther is ten years of age: my eldest son is named Robert; the second Gilbert; the third William; the fourth John; my eldest douther is named Agnes; the second Anna Bela; the third Isbal.

'My Brother lives at Stewarton, by Kilmarnock; he hath two sons and one douther, named John, William, and Fanny; their circumstances are very indifferent.

'I shall be happy to hear from you when it is convenient, when I shall writt to you from time to time. Please give my respects to your Brother and Sister in the kindest manner, and to your Wife, which will greatly oblige your affectionate Uncle,

WILLIAM BURNES.

'Lochlie, Aprill 14, 1781.'

* Murdoch was born in Ayr, on 25th March 1747.

† According to Mrs Begg, the poet's youngest sister, the old woman whose store of legends made so deep an impression on his infant mind was named Betty Davidson. She was the widow of a cousin of Mrs Burnes, and mainly dependent on a son whose wife was unkind to her. For this reason, William Burnes used to invite the poor old woman to spend a few months at a time with his family, both at Alloway and at Mount Oliphant, where, to requite his kindness, she was most assiduous in spinning, carding, and doing all kinds of good offices that were in her power. She was of a mirthful temperament, and therefore a great favourite with the children. Mrs Begg remembered the particular impression made upon them by a string of uncommonly large amber (*Scottice*, lammer) beads which she wore round her neck.

variety in it, lent him the *Life of Hannibal*, which was the first book he read (the school-books excepted), and almost the only one he had an opportunity of reading while he was at school; for the *Life of Wallace*, which he classes with it in one of his letters, he did not see for some years afterwards, when he borrowed it from the blacksmith who shod our horses.' *

The poet was seven years of age when (1766) his father left the cottage at Alloway, and settled in the small upland farm of Mount Oliphant, about a couple of miles distant. † He and his younger brother, nevertheless, continued to attend Murdoch's school for two years longer, till it was broken up, in consequence of its master obtaining more remunerative employment elsewhere. Gilbert remembered a circumstance occurring at this time, which he thought illustrative of his brother's character: 'Murdoch came to spend a night with us, and to take his leave when he was about to go into Carrick. He brought us a present and memorial of him, a small compendium of English Grammar, and the tragedy of *Titus Andronicus*, and by way of passing the evening, he began to read the play aloud. We were all attention for some time, till presently the whole party was dissolved in tears. A female in the play (I have but a confused recollection of it) had her hands chopt off, her tongue cut out, and then was insultingly desired to call for water to wash her hands. At this, in an agony of distress, we with one voice desired he would read no more. My father observed that if we would not hear it out, it would be needless to leave the play with us. Robert replied that if it was left he would burn it. My father was going to chide him for this ungrateful return to his tutor's kindness; but Murdoch interfered, declaring that he liked to see so much sensibility; and he left the *School for Love*, a comedy (translated, I think, from the French) in its place.'

William Burnes from this time took upon himself the duty of

* This is now said to have been Henry M'Candlish, or Candlish, blacksmith at Parclewan, in Dalrymple parish. He was the father of James Candlish, who, born in the same year as Burns, was educated with him at the Dalrymple Parish School and the Burgh School of Ayr. He appears later on as a correspondent of the poet.

† 'The farm of Mount Oliphant,' says Gilbert, 'was upwards of seventy acres; the rent was £40 annually for the first six years (Martinmas 1765 to Martinmas 1771), and afterwards (1771 to 1777) £45. My father endeavoured to sell his leasehold property in Alloway for the purpose of stocking his farm, but at that time was unable, and Mr Fergusson lent him £100 for that purpose.' Mount Oliphant is now the property of Mr R. A. Oswald of Auchincruive. Its rent is upward of £80.

educating his family. 'Nothing,' continues Gilbert, 'could be more retired than our general manner of living at Mount Oliphant; we rarely saw anybody but the members of our own family. There were no boys of our own age, or near it, in the neighbourhood. Indeed the greater part of the land in the vicinity was at that time possessed by shopkeepers, and people of that stamp, who had retired from business, or who kept their farm in the country, at the same time that they followed business in town. My father was for some time almost the only companion we had. He conversed familiarly on all subjects with us, as if we had been men; and was at great pains, as we accompanied him in the labours of the farm, to lead the conversation to such subjects as might tend to increase our knowledge, or confirm our virtuous habits. He borrowed Salmon's *Geographical Grammar* for us, and endeavoured to make us acquainted with the situation and history of the different countries in the world; while, from a book-society in Ayr, he procured for us Derham's *Physico and Astro-Theology*, and Ray's *Wisdom of God in the Creation*, to give us some idea of astronomy and natural history. Robert read all these books with an avidity and industry scarcely to be equalled. My father had been a subscriber to Stackhouse's *History of the Bible*, then lately published by James Meuros in Kilmarnock: from this Robert collected a competent knowledge of ancient history; for no book was so voluminous as to slacken his industry, or so antiquated as to damp his researches. A brother of my mother, who had lived with us some time, and had learnt some arithmetic by our winter evening's candle, went into a bookseller's shop in Ayr to purchase the *Ready Reckoner, or Tradesman's Sure Guide*, and a book to teach him to write letters. Luckily, in place of the *Complete Letter-Writer*, he got by mistake a small collection of letters by the most eminent writers, with a few sensible directions for attaining an easy epistolary style. This book was to Robert of the greatest consequence. It inspired him with a strong desire to excel in letter-writing, while it furnished him with models by some of the first writers in our language.

'My brother was about thirteen or fourteen, when my father, regretting that we wrote so ill, sent us, week about, during a summer quarter, to the parish school of Dalrymple, which, though between two and three miles distant, was the nearest to us, that

we might have an opportunity of remedying this defect. About this time a bookish acquaintance of my father's procured us a reading of two volumes of Richardson's *Pamela*, which was the first novel we read, and the only part of Richardson's works my brother was acquainted with, till towards the period of his commencing author. Till that time, too, he remained unacquainted with Fielding, with Smollett (two volumes of *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, and two volumes of *Peregrine Pickle*, excepted), with Hume, with Robertson, and almost all our authors of eminence of the later times. I recollect, indeed, my father borrowed a volume of English history from Mr Hamilton of Bourtree-hill's gardener. It treated of the reigns of James I. and his unfortunate son Charles, but I do not know who was the author; all that I remember of it is something of Charles's conversation with his children. About this time, Murdoch, our former teacher, after having been in different places in the country, and having taught a school some time in Dumfries, came to be the established teacher of the English language in Ayr, a circumstance of considerable consequence to us. The remembrance of my father's former friendship, and his attachment to my brother, made him do everything in his power for our improvement. He sent us Pope's *Works*, and some other poetry, the first that we had an opportunity of reading, excepting what is contained in the *English Collection*, and in the volume of the *Edinburgh Magazine* for 1772; excepting also those *Excellent new songs* that are hawked about the country in baskets, or exposed on stalls in the streets.

'The summer after we had been at Dalrymple School, my father sent Robert to Ayr, to revise his English grammar with his former teacher. He had been there only one week, when he was obliged to return, to assist at the harvest. When the harvest was over, he went back to school, where he remained two weeks; and this completes the account of his school education, excepting one summer quarter, some time afterwards, that he attended the parish school of Kirkoswald (where he lived with a brother of my mother's) to learn surveying.

'During the two last weeks that he was with Murdoch, he himself was engaged in learning French,* and he communicated

* Mr John Tennant, second son of Burns's warm friend, 'Auld Glenconner,' and himself a noted agriculturist, gave in 1838 these reminiscences of Burns: 'He first knew the poet

the instructions he received to my brother, who, when he returned, brought home with him a French dictionary and grammar, and the *Adventures of Telemachus* in the original. In a little while, by the assistance of these books, he had acquired such a knowledge of the language, as to read and understand any French author in prose. This was considered as a sort of prodigy, and, through the medium of Murdoch, procured him the acquaintance of several lads in Ayr, who were at that time gabbling French, and the notice of some families, particularly that of Dr Malcolm, where a knowledge of French was a recommendation.

'Observing the facility with which he had acquired the French language, Mr Robinson, the established writing-master in Ayr, and Mr Murdoch's particular friend, having himself acquired a considerable knowledge of the Latin language by his own industry, without ever having learnt it at school, advised Robert to make the same attempt, promising him every assistance in his power. Agreeably to this advice, he purchased the *Rudiments of the Latin Tongue*, but finding this study dry and uninteresting, it was quickly laid aside. He frequently returned to his Rudiments on any little chagrin or disappointment, particularly in his love affairs; but the Latin seldom predominated more than a day or two at a time, or a week at most. Observing himself the ridicule that would attach to this sort of conduct if it were known, he made two or three humorous stanzas on the subject, which I cannot now recollect; but they all ended,

So I 'll to my Latin again.

'Thus you see Mr Murdoch was a principal means of my

when attending Mr Murdoch's school at Ayr, he being then fifteen, and Burns a year and a half older. Burns and he were favourite pupils of Murdoch, who used to take them alternately to live with him, allowing them a share of his bed. Mr Murdoch was a well-informed and zealous teacher—a particularly good French scholar, insomuch that he at one time taught the language in France. He thought his voice had some peculiar quality or power, adapting it in an uncommon degree for French pronunciation. Murdoch was so anxious to advance his favourite pupils, that, while they were lying with him, he was always taking opportunities of communicating knowledge. The intellectual gifts of Burns, even at this time, greatly impressed his fellow-scholar. Robert and Gilbert Burns were like no other young men. Their style of language was quite above that of their compeers. Robert had borrowed great numbers of books, and acquainted himself with their contents. He read rapidly, but remembered all that was interesting or valuable in what he read. He had the New Testament more at command than any other youth ever known to Mr Tennant, who was altogether more impressed in these his boyish days by the discourse of the youthful poet, than he afterwards was by his published verses.' Mr Tennant, who was born in 1760, survived till 1853.

brother's improvement. Worthy man! though foreign to my present purpose, I cannot take leave of him without tracing his future history. He continued for some years a respected and useful teacher at Ayr, till one evening that he had been overtaken in liquor, he happened to speak somewhat disrespectfully of Dr Dalrymple, the parish minister, who had not paid him that attention to which he thought himself entitled. In Ayr he might as well have spoken blasphemy. He found it proper to give up his appointment. He went to London, where he still lives (1797), a private teacher of French. He has been a considerable time married, and keeps a shop of stationery wares.*

'The father of Dr Paterson, now physician at Ayr, was, I believe, a native of Aberdeenshire, and was one of the established teachers in Ayr when my father settled in the neighbourhood. He early recognised my father as a fellow-native of the north of Scotland, and a certain degree of intimacy subsisted between them during Mr Paterson's life. After his death, his widow, who is a very genteel woman, and of great worth, delighted in doing what she thought her husband would have wished to have done, and assiduously kept up her attentions to all his acquaintance. She kept alive the intimacy with our family, by frequently inviting my father and mother to her house on Sundays, when she met them at church.

* The circumstances of Murdoch's retirement from Ayr, to which Gilbert Burns here makes allusion, are these: He was appointed one of the English teachers in the burgh school in the end of 1772; but, as the result of a petition which was laid before the magistrates by James Neill, procurator-fiscal, he was dismissed from his post on the 14th February 1776. The complaint set forth that he did, 'particularly within the house of Mrs Tennant, inn-keeper in Ayr, as well as in the house of Patrick Auld, weaver in Ayr, utter the following, or such like, unworthy, base, reproachful, and wicked expressions—viz., that he, Dr William Dalrymple, was as revengeful as hell, and as false as the devil; and that he was a liar, or a damned liar; that he, the said John Murdoch, also called Mr Dalrymple a hypocrite, or accused him of hypocrisy.' How Murdoch supported himself during his residence in London is not quite clear. His pupil, the poet, addressed him as 'teacher of French;' yet, in a letter written to Burns in 1790, he speaks of 'my shop.' According to the notices of his career, which appeared in certain London papers after his death, he taught English to several 'distinguished foreigners, including Talleyrand.' Among his latter-day pupils was also, it is stated, Mrs Everett, the grand-daughter of the poet. Murdoch is further believed to have assisted John Walker, the lexicographer, in preparing for publication the third edition of his Dictionary, which was published in 1802, and to have written the 'Rules to be observed by the natives of Scotland for attaining a just pronunciation of English,' which are included in it. His own works are a *Radical Vocabulary of the French Language*, 1783; *Pronunciation and Orthography of the French Language*, 1788; and a *Dictionary of Distinctions, in Three Alphabets*, 1811. Latterly, illness reduced Murdoch to the brink of destitution; and a small sum was raised for him by the admirers of the poet. He died April 20, 1824, at the age of seventy-seven.

'When she came to know my brother's passion for books, she kindly offered us the use of her husband's library, and from her we got the *Spectator*, Pope's *Translation of Homer*, and several other books that were of use to us. Mount Oliphant, the farm my father possessed in the parish of Ayr, is almost the very poorest soil I know of in a state of cultivation. A stronger proof of this I cannot give, than that, notwithstanding the extraordinary rise in the value of lands in Scotland, it was, after a considerable sum laid out in improving it by the proprietor, let a few years ago five pounds per annum lower than the rent paid for it by my father thirty years ago. My father, in consequence of this, soon came into difficulties, which were increased by the loss of several of his cattle by accidents and disease. To the buffetings of misfortune we could only oppose hard labour, and the most rigid economy. We lived very sparingly. For several years butcher's meat was a stranger in the house, while all the members of the family exerted themselves to the utmost of their strength, and rather beyond it, in the labours of the farm. My brother, at the age of thirteen, assisted in thrashing the crop of corn, and at fifteen was the principal labourer on the farm, for we had no hired servant, male or female. The anguish of mind we felt at our tender years under these straits and difficulties was very great. To think of our father growing old (for he was now above fifty), broken down with the long-continued fatigues of his life, with a wife and five other children, and in a declining state of circumstances; these reflections produced in my brother's mind and mine sensations of the deepest distress. I doubt not but the hard labour and sorrow of this period of his life was in a great measure the cause of that depression of spirits with which Robert was so often afflicted through his whole life afterwards. At this time he was almost constantly afflicted in the evenings with a dull headache, which, at a future period of his life, was exchanged for a palpitation of the heart, and a threatening of fainting and suffocation in his bed in the night-time.'

The reader will have caught from these narrations some notion of the poet's surroundings. Of his father, Dr Currie writes: 'The father of our poet is described by one who knew him towards the latter end of his life as above the common stature, thin, and bent with labour. His countenance was serious and expressive,

and the scanty locks on his head were gray. He was of a religious turn of mind, and, as is usual among the Scottish peasantry, a good deal conversant in speculative theology. There is in Gilbert's hands a little manual of religious belief,* in the form of a dialogue between a father and his son, composed by him for the use of his children, in which the benevolence of his heart seems to have led him to soften the rigid Calvinism of the Scottish Church into something approaching to Arminianism. He was a devout man, and in the practice of calling his family together to join in prayer. It is known that the following exquisite picture in the "Cotter's Saturday Night" represents William Burnes and his family at their evening devotions :—

"The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
They, round the ingle, form a circle wide; fire
The sire turns o'er, with patriarchal grace,
The big ha'-bible, ance his father's pride:
His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets wearing thin and bare; gray temples
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales a portion with judicious care; chooses
And 'Let us worship God!' he says with solemn air.

"They chant their artless notes in simple guise;
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim:
Perhaps *Dundee's*† wild-warbling measures rise,
Or plaintive *Martyrs*,† worthy of the name;
Or noble *Elgin*† beets the heaven-ward flame, adds fuel to
The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays:
Compar'd with these, Italian trills are tame;
The tickl'd ears no heart-felt raptures raise;
Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

"The priest-like father reads the sacred page,‡
How Abram was the friend of God on high;

* This manual is given as portion of Appendix II.

† Names of tunes in Scottish psalmody. The tunes mentioned in this poem are the three which were used by William Burnes, who had no great variety.

‡ The course of family devotion among the people of Scotland is—first to sing a psalm; then to read a portion of Scripture; and lastly, to kneel down in prayer.

Or, Moses bade eternal warfare wage
With Amalek's ungracious progeny;
Or, how the royal bard did groaning lie
Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;
Or Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry;
Or rapt Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire;
Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

"Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;
How He, who bore in Heaven the second name,
Had not on earth whereon to lay His head;
How His first followers and servants sped;
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land;
How he, who lone in Patmos banishèd,
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand,
And heard great Bab'lon's doom pronounc'd, by Heaven's command.

"Then kneeling down to Heaven's Eternal King,
The saint, the father, and the husband prays:
'Hope springs exulting on triumphant wing,'
That thus they all shall meet in future days,
There, ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their Creator's praise,
In such society, yet still more dear;
While circling Time moves round in an eternal sphere.

* * * * *

"Then homeward all take off their sev'ral way;
The youngling cottagers retire to rest:
The parent-pair their secret homage pay,
And proffer up to Heaven the warm request,
That He who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flow'ry pride,
Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide,
But chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine preside."'

Murdoch communicated to Dr Currie the following account of the Burnes household and his introduction to it: '. . . In 1765, about the middle of March, Mr W. Burnes came to Ayr, and sent to the school, where I was improving in writing under my good friend Mr Robinson, desiring that I would come and speak to him at a certain inn, and bring my writing-book with me. This was immediately complied with. Having examined my writing, he was pleased with it (you will allow he was not difficult); and told me that he had received very satisfactory information from Mr Tennant, the master of the English school, concerning my improvement in English, and in his method of teaching.* In the month of May following, I was engaged by Mr Burnes and four of his neighbours, to teach, and accordingly began to teach the little school at Alloway, which was situated a few yards from the argillaceous fabric [the "tabernacle of clay"] above-mentioned. My five employers undertook to board me by turns, and to make up a certain salary at the end of the year, provided my quarterly payments from the different pupils did not amount to that sum.

'My pupil, Robert Burns, was then between six and seven years of age; his preceptor, about eighteen. Robert and his younger brother, Gilbert, had been grounded a little in English before they were put under my care. They both made a rapid progress in reading, and a tolerable progress in writing. In reading, dividing words into syllables by rule, spelling without book, parsing sentences, &c., Robert and Gilbert were generally at the upper end of the class, even when ranged with boys far their seniors. The books most commonly used in the school were the *Spelling-Book*, the *New Testament*, the *Bible*, Masson's *Collection of Prose and Verse*, and Fisher's *English Grammar*. They committed to memory the hymns and other poems of that collection with uncommon facility. This facility was partly owing to the method pursued by their father and me in instructing them, which was, to make them thoroughly acquainted with the meaning of every word in each sentence that was to be committed to memory. By the bye, this may be easier done, and at an earlier period, than is generally thought. As soon as they were capable

* This was Mr David Tennant, a younger brother of Mr John Tennant of Glenconner. He died in 1823, at the age of eighty-nine.

of it, I taught them to turn verse into its natural prose order; sometimes to substitute synonymous expressions for poetical words, and to supply all the ellipses. These, you know, are the means of knowing that the pupil understands his author. These are excellent helps to the arrangement of words in sentences, as well as to a variety of expression.

'Gilbert always appeared to me to possess a more lively imagination, and to be more of the wit, than Robert. I attempted to teach them a little church-music. Here they were left far behind by all the rest of the school. Robert's ear, in particular, was remarkably dull, and his voice untunable. It was long before I could get them to distinguish one tune from another. Robert's countenance was generally grave, and expressive of a serious, contemplative, and thoughtful mind. Gilbert's face said, "Mirth, with thee I mean to live;" and certainly, if any person who knew the two boys had been asked which of them was the most likely to court the Muses, he would surely never have guessed that Robert had a propensity of that kind.

'In the year 1767 [1766], Mr Burnes quitted his mud edifice, and took possession of a farm—Mount Oliphant—of his own improving, while in the service of Provost Fergusson. This farm being at a considerable distance from the school, the boys could not attend regularly; and some changes taking place among the other supporters of the school, I left it, having continued to conduct it for nearly two years and a half.

'In the year 1772, I was appointed—being one of five candidates who were examined—to teach the English school at Ayr; and in 1773, Robert Burns came to board and lodge with me, for the purpose of revising English grammar, &c., that he might be better qualified to instruct his brothers and sisters at home. He was now with me day and night, in school, at all meals, and in all my walks. At the end of one week, I told him that as he was now pretty much master of the parts of speech, &c., I should like to teach him something of French pronunciation, that when he should meet with the name of a French town, ship, officer, or the like, in the newspapers, he might be able to pronounce it something like a French word. Robert was glad to hear this proposal, and immediately we attacked the French with great courage.

'Now there was little else to be heard but the declension of nouns, the conjugation of verbs, &c. When walking together, and even at meals, I was constantly telling him the names of different objects, as they presented themselves, in French; so that he was hourly laying in a stock of words, and sometimes little phrases. In short, he took such pleasure in learning, and I in teaching, that it was difficult to say which of the two was most zealous in the business; and about the end of the second week of our study of the French, we began to read a little of the *Adventures of Telemachus* in Fénélon's own words.

'But now the plains of Mount Oliphant began to whiten, and Robert was summoned to relinquish the pleasing scenes that surrounded the grotto of Calypso, and, armed with a sickle, to seek glory by signalising himself in the fields of Ceres; and so he did, for although but about fifteen, I was told that he performed the work of a man.

'Thus was I deprived of my very apt pupil, and, consequently, agreeable companion, at the end of three weeks, one of which was spent entirely in the study of English, and the other two chiefly in that of French. I did not, however, lose sight of him, but was a frequent visitant at his father's house, when I had my half-holiday; and very often went, accompanied with one or two persons more intelligent than myself, that good William Burnes might enjoy a mental feast. Then the labouring oar was shifted to some other hand. The father and the son sat down with us, when we enjoyed a conversation, wherein solid reasoning, sensible remark, and a moderate seasoning of jocularity, were so nicely blended, as to render it palatable to all parties. Robert had a hundred questions to ask me about the French, &c.; and the father, who had always rational information in view, had still some question to propose to my more learned friends, upon moral or natural philosophy, or some such interesting subject. Mrs Burnes, too, was of the party as much as possible:

> But still the house affairs would draw her thence,
> Which, even as she could with haste despatch,
> She 'd come again, and with a greedy ear
> Devour up their discourse——

and particularly that of her husband. At all times, and in all companies, she listened to him with a more marked attention

than to anybody else. When under the necessity of being absent while he was speaking, she seemed to regret, as a real loss, that she had missed what the good man had said. This worthy woman, Agnes Brown, had the most thorough esteem for her husband of any woman I ever knew. I can by no means wonder that she highly esteemed him; for I myself have always considered William Burnes as by far the best of the human race that ever I had the pleasure of being acquainted with—and many a worthy character I have known. I can cheerfully join with Robert in the last line of his epitaph (borrowed from Goldsmith)—

And ev'n his failings lean'd to virtue's side.

He was an excellent husband, if I may judge from his assiduous attention to the ease and comfort of his worthy partner; and from her affectionate behaviour to him, as well as her unwearied attention to the duties of a mother.

'He was a tender and affectionate father; he took pleasure in leading his children in the path of virtue; not in driving them, as some parents do, to the performance of duties to which they themselves are averse. He took care to find fault but seldom; and, therefore, when he did rebuke, he was listened to with a kind of reverential awe. A look of disapprobation was felt; a reproof was severely so; and a stripe with the *tawz*, even on the skirt of the coat, gave heartfelt pain, produced a loud lamentation, and brought forth a flood of tears.

'He had the art of gaining the esteem and good-will of those that were labourers under him. I think I never saw him angry but twice: the one time it was with the foreman of the band for not reaping the field as he was desired: and the other time it was with an old man for using smutty inuendoes and *double entendres*. Were every foul-mouthed old man to receive a seasonable check in this way, it would be to the advantage of the rising generation. As he was at no time overbearing to inferiors, he was equally incapable of that passive, pitiful, paltry spirit, that induces some people to keep *booing and booing* in the presence of a great man. He always treated superiors with a becoming respect; but he never gave the smallest encouragement to aristocratical arrogance. But I must not pretend to give you a description of all the manly qualities, the rational and Christian virtues, of the venerable

William Burnes. Time would fail me. I shall only add, that he carefully practised every known duty, and avoided everything that was criminal; or, in the Apostle's words, "Herein did he exercise himself, in living a life void of offence towards God and towards men." O for a world of men of such dispositions! We should then have no wars. I have often wished, for the good of mankind, that it were as customary to honour and perpetuate the memory of those who excel in moral rectitude, as it is to extol what are called heroic actions: then would the mausoleum of the friend of my youth overtop and surpass most of the monuments I see in Westminster Abbey.

'Although I cannot do justice to the character of this worthy man, yet you will perceive, from these few particulars, what kind of person had the principal hand in the education of our poet. He spoke the English language with more propriety—both with respect to diction and pronunciation—than any man I ever knew, with no greater advantages. This had a very good effect on the boys, who began to talk and reason like men, much sooner than their neighbours. . . .'

These narratives show that Robert Burns was the child of poverty and toil, but also that there were fortunate circumstances in his position. The first of these was that he had parents of such singular excellence, and particularly that his father was a model of humble intelligence and worth. The mother of Burns appears to have been a typical mother of the class which has been termed 'the moral aristocracy of Scotland,' attentive to her household, conscientious in discharging the duty she owed to her children, and full of veneration for her husband.* She had, however, no pretensions to commanding intellect, or to more than an average country education. His lyric gift Burns may have inherited to some extent from his mother, but he derived his strong sense, his independence, and indeed all his more notable qualities, along with a keenly nervous temperament and a swarthy complexion, from his father. Thrown amongst people

* 'According to Mrs Begg, her mother was about the ordinary height: a well-made, sonsy figure, with a beautiful red and white complexion—a skin the most transparent Mrs Begg ever saw—red hair, dark eyes and eyebrows, with a fine square forehead; with all her good qualities—and they were many—her temper at times was irascible. William Burnes, the father of the poet, was a thin sinewy figure, about five feet eight or nine inches in height, somewhat bent with toil; his haffet-locks thin and bare, with a dark swarthy complexion.'—Captain Charles Gray, in Wood's *Songs of Scotland* (1848).

beneath him in intellect, William Burnes seems to have withdrawn into himself, and hence it was that to observers he seemed chill and austere, if not dull. But, as one of his son's biographers has observed, 'when he found a companion to his taste, with whom he could make a fair exchange of mind, he seemed to grow into a different being, or into one suddenly restored to his native element.'* In this respect it will be found that his son was exactly his second self. William Burnes had taken upon himself the cares of a farm, hazarding the difficulties which were almost certain to arise from his want of capital, so that he might have occupation for his children at home, instead of sending them forth to take their chance of demoralisation amongst strangers. He exerted himself as their instructor, and, cottar though he was, contrived to procure something like the benefits of private tuition for his two eldest sons. The mind which dictated such sacrifices for a high principle could not be one of a common mould. And here it is that we find the second of the fortunate circumstances of Burns. By the father's model of life, and the teaching which his self-sacrifice secured, the young poet became, comparatively speaking, a well-educated man. In Scotland, indeed, such self-sacrifice on the part of parents for their children has long been the rule, and not the exception. Yet even for a Scotsman the exertions of William Burnes for the education of his two boys are of so extraordinary a character, that one is tempted to surmise some motive for his conduct beyond what appears on the surface. Such may perhaps be found in the opinion which there is good reason to believe William Burnes held as to the character of his children. He had remarked, we are told,† from a very early period, the bright intellect of his eldest son in particular, saying to his wife: 'Whoever may live to see it, something extraordinary will come from that boy.'

In other respects, however, the lot of Burns was a severe one. He had his full share of the hardships incurred by the father for the sake of his children. While still a boy in years—from thirteen to fifteen—he was called upon, by stern necessity, to do the work of a man. By hard and premature labour his naturally robust frame was severely injured. Externally, the consequences appeared in a stoop of the shoulders, which became

* Walker's *Life of Burns*. † Such was the report of the poet's sister, Mrs Begg.

permanent; internally, in the more serious form of mental depression, attended by a nervous disorder, which affected his heart.* The unsocial life which a high-principled economy dictated in his father's household at Mount Oliphant, rendered him, by his own acknowledgment, a rude and clownish *solitaire.* He admits that at that time he was not popular. Under 'the cheerless gloom of a hermit, and the unceasing moil of a galley-slave'—as yet unsoftened by the gentler passions—he was not likely to be a favourite in society. The first touch of 'that delicious passion, which, in spite of acid disappointment, gin-horse prudence, and book-worm philosophy, I hold to be the first of human joys,' was experienced in his fifteenth autumn, in the harvest-field, the cause being that 'bonie, sweet, sonsie lass,' a year younger than himself, who had been assigned to him as the partner of his labours—Nelly Kilpatrick by name, the daughter of Allan Kilpatrick, miller at Parclewan, in Dalrymple Parish.† This girl sang a song which had been composed by a neighbouring country lad, and Burns fancied he too might be able to compose a song. He therefore made one upon her charms —'very puerile and silly,' he afterwards confessed, but then, he adds: 'I composed it in a wild enthusiasm of passion, and to this hour I never recollect it but my heart melts, my blood sallies at the remembrance.' It was as follows:

HANDSOME NELL.

TUNE—*I am a man unmarried.*

O once I lov'd a bonie lass,
  Aye, and I love her still;
And whilst that virtue warms my breast,
  I'll love my handsome Nell.

As bonie lasses I hae seen,
  And mony full as braw; well dressed
But, for a modest gracefu' mien,
  The like I never saw.

* While Burns's mother lived to a great age, his maternal grandmother died of pulmonary disease at the age of thirty-four.

† Nelly married William Bone, coachman to the Laird of Newark. She died about the year 1820.

A bonie lass, I will confess,
Is pleasant to the e'e;
But without some better qualities,
She 's no a lass for me.

But Nelly's looks are blythe and sweet,
And, what is best of a',
Her reputation is complete,
And fair without a flaw.*

She dresses ay sae clean and neat,
Both decent and genteel;
And then there 's something in her gait
Gars ony dress look weel. Makes

A gaudy dress and gentle air
May slightly touch the heart;
But it 's innocence and modesty
That polishes the dart.

'Tis this in Nelly pleases me,
'Tis this enchants my soul;
For absolutely in my breast
She reigns without controul.

It must have been about two years after he made his first essay in poetry that Burns attended a 'noted school,' on 'a smuggling coast a good distance from home,' for the express purpose of learning 'mensuration, surveying, dialling, &c.,' but with the result that he learned to 'fill his glass, and to mix without fear in a drunken squabble,' and that 'a charming *fillette*, who lived next door to the school, overset his trigonometry, and set him off in a tangent from the sphere of his studies.'

The scene of this adventure was Kirkoswald, in Carrick. If the poet be right in speaking of his seventeenth summer,† the date

* Variation—

'But Nelly's looks are blythe and sweet,
Good-humoured, frank, and free;
And still the more I view them o'er,
The more they captive me.'

† 'My seventeenth summer,' Burns says distinctly. Currie, who appears to have taken

must have been 1775. What no doubt suggested his going to Kirkoswald school was the connection of his mother with that parish. She was, as has already been stated, the daughter of Gilbert Broun, farmer of Craigenton, in Carrick, where she had many friends still living. Her brother, Samuel Broun, at once a farm-labourer, fisherman, and dealer in wool, resided at the farmhouse of Ballochneil, about a mile from the village of Kirkoswald, and close to the Corriston Burn (now the Milton), which falls into the Firth of Clyde a little to the south of Turnberry Castle. Samuel, though not the tenant of the farm, was highly respected in a district where the distinction between master and servant was, and still is, by no means great. His wife was the daughter of Robert Niven, the tenant; and he lived in a room adjoining the mill which was attached to the farm. It seems to have been in the farmhouse itself that Burns lived during his attendance at Kirkoswald school, walking every morning to the village, and returning at night. It is believed that he shared an attic-bed with John Niven, the farmer's son.

The district, situated on the shore of the busy Firth of Clyde, into which the young poet of Kyle was thus thrown, has many remarkable features. Its land, composed of bleak green uplands, partly cultivated and partly pastoral, was, in Burns's day, occupied by a number of small farmers, many of whom, while preserving their native simplicity, had superadded to it some of the irregular habits arising from a share in the trade of introducing contraband goods on the Carrick coast.* The parish has six miles of sea-coast; and the village, where the church and school are situated, is in a sheltered situation about a couple of miles inland.

The parish schoolmaster, Hugh Roger, who appears to have been a self-taught man of some force of character, had a high reputation in the district as a teacher of mensuration and geometry, and

the advice of Gilbert upon this point, changed 'seventeenth' to 'nineteenth,' and thus placed the Kirkoswald experiences of the poet under the Tarbolton period of his life. But as no good reason has been given for this alteration, and as Gilbert Burns's memory often played him false, the chronology of the autobiography is here adhered to.

* 'This business was first carried on here from the Isle of Man, and afterwards to a considerable extent from France, Ostend, and Gottenburg. Persons engaged in it found it necessary to go abroad, and enter into business with foreign merchants; and by dealing in tea, spirits, and silks, brought home to their families and friends the means of luxury and finery at the cheapest rate.'—*Statistical Account of Kirkoswald*, 1794.

was much employed as a practical land-surveyor. A generally accepted tradition has it that, on the day when Burns entered at the school, another youth, a little younger than himself, also entered. This was William Niven, nephew of the tenant of Ballochneil, a native of the neighbouring town of Maybole, who, having there completed a course of classical study, was now sent by his father, a well-to-do shopkeeper, to acquire arithmetic and mensuration under the 'noted' mathematician of Kirkoswald. It was then the custom, when pupils of their age entered at a school, to take the master to a tavern and treat him to liquor. Burns and his friend, accordingly, agreed to give Roger a draught of ale at the Kirkton Inn, a public-house in the village kept by two women of the name of Kennedy—Jean and Anne—the former of whom was destined to be afterwards married to immortal verse, under the appellation of *Kirkton Jean*, and whose house, in consideration of some pretensions they had to birth or style above the common, was always called 'The Ladies' House.' From that time Burns and William Niven became intimate friends, and during this summer spent practically the whole of their time together. Burns was at the village during school-hours only; but when his friend returned home of a Saturday night, the poet would accompany him, and remain till it was time for both to go back to school on Monday morning. There was also an interval between the morning and afternoon meetings of the school, which the two youths used to spend together. Instead of amusing themselves with ball or any other sport, like the rest of the scholars, they would take a walk in the outskirts of the village, and converse on subjects calculated to improve their minds. By-and-by they fell upon a plan of holding disputations or arguments on speculative questions, one taking one side, and the other the other, without much regard to their respective opinions on the point, the whole object being to sharpen their intellects. They asked several of their companions to come and take a side in these debates, but not one would do so; they only laughed at the young sophists. The matter at length reached the ears of the master, who, however skilled in mathematics, possessed, like many specialists, but a limited amount of general knowledge. With all the bigotry of the old school, he decided that this attempt of his pupils to educate themselves was ridicu-

lous, and resolved to correct them for it. One day, therefore, he went up to the desk where Burns and Niven were sitting opposite to each other, and began to comment sarcastically on what he had heard of them. They had become great debaters, he understood, and conceived themselves fit to settle affairs of importance, which wiser heads usually let alone. He hoped their disputations would not ultimately become quarrels, and that they would never think of coming from words to blows; and so forth. The other pupils received these remarks with hearty peals of laughter. Nettled at this, Niven resolved he would 'speak up' to Roger; but first asked Burns in a whisper if he would support him, which Burns promised to do. He then said he was sorry to find that Robert and he had given offence: it had not been intended; and indeed he had expected that the master would have been rather pleased to know of their endeavours to improve their minds. He could assure him that such improvement was the sole object they had in view. Roger sneered at the idea of their improving their minds by nonsensical discussions, and contemptuously asked what were the subjects of their debates. Niven replied that generally there was a new subject every day; that he could not recollect all that had come under their attention; but the question of that day had been, 'Whether is a great general or a respectable merchant the most valuable member of society?' Roger laughed uproariously at what he called the silliness of such a question, seeing there could be no doubt as to the correct answer. 'Well,' said Burns, 'if you think so, I will be glad if you take any side you please, and allow me to take the other, and let us discuss it before the school.' Roger most unwisely assented, and commenced the argument by a flourish in favour of the general. Burns answered with a pointed advocacy of the claim of the merchant, and soon had an evident superiority over his teacher. Roger replied, but without success. His hand was observed to shake; his voice trembled; and he hastily closured the debate.*

At the farm of Shanter,† on a slope overlooking the shore,

* Hugh Roger died at Kirkoswald in 1797, at the age of seventy-one. William Niven, who prospered greatly as a merchant in Maybole, and accumulated a considerable fortune, with a portion of which he bought an estate in the neighbourhood, died in 1844, at the age of eighty-eight. John Niven, who married Jean Roger, a daughter of the Kirkoswald schoolmaster, died in 1822, at the age of sixty-eight.

† 'Shanter' is, by some authorities, believed to be a corruption of the Gaelic *sean torr*, an old mound. The farm is supposed, therefore, to have derived its name from an

about half a mile to the east of Turnberry Castle, lived Douglas Graham, a stout specimen of the Carrick farmer, a little given to smuggling and tippling, but withal a worthy and upright member of society. He had a wife named Helen M'Taggart,* who was unusually subject to superstitious beliefs and fears. The *steading* where this good couple lived is now no more, for the lands have been divided and added to two adjoining farms; but Douglas and Helen Graham are universally understood to have been immortalised as 'Tam' and 'Kate' in 'Tam o' Shanter.'

Various stories, illustrative of the character, or bearing on the after life, of Burns, are told in connection with his stay at Kirkoswald. It is said that he engaged heartily in such sports as leaping, dancing, wrestling, and *putting* (throwing) the stone. His innate thirst for distinction and superiority was manifested in these as in more important affairs; but though he was possessed of great strength, as well as skill, he could never beat his young bedfellow, John Niven. By way of revenge for his defeat at athletics, he would engage young Niven in an argument on some speculative question, when, of course, he invariably proved victor. His satisfaction on these occasions is said to have been extreme. 'One day, as he was walking slowly along the street of the village with his eyes bent on the ground, as was usual with him, he met the Misses Biggar, the daughters of the parish minister. He would have passed without noticing them, if one of the girls had not addressed him. She rallied him on preferring to look at the inanimate ground, instead of seizing the opportunity afforded him of indulging in the most invaluable privilege of man—that of beholding and conversing with woman. "Madam," he retorted, "it is a natural and right thing for man to contemplate the ground, from whence *he* was taken, and for woman to look upon and observe man, from whom *she* was taken."'†

artificial mound or tumulus upon it—one of the moot-hills used at one time for the administration of justice.

* Douglas Graham died in 1811, at the age of seventy-three. His wife died in 1798, at the age of fifty-six.

† A Kirkoswald legend, which, as will subsequently be seen, must be taken with more than one grain of salt, may, on account of its obstinate popularity, be here given, as told by the late Dr Charles Rogers, the latest investigator into its truth: 'The annual summer holiday of Kirkoswald school was observed on the first Thursday of July, the day of the annual horse-fair at Ayr; and the two students at Ballochneil resolved to improve the occasion by attempting a fishing expedition on the coast. They, accordingly, at the small creek or harbour of the Maidens, embarked in the "Tam o' Shanter," a small boat belonging

Burns, according to his own account, concluded his residence at Kirkoswald in a blaze of passion for 'a charming *fillette*'* who lived next door to the school. At this time, owing to the destruction of the school proper—a room at the end of the old church—the teacher laboured in an apartment on the ground-floor of a house in the main street of the village, opposite the churchyard; the room is understood to have been leased by the heritors of the parish for a guinea a year. Behind every house a small strip of kail-yard (kitchen-garden) runs back about fifty yards, up a rapidly ascending slope. When Burns went into the patch behind the school to take the sun's altitude, he could look over a low enclosure into the kail-yard of the next house. Here, it seems, he one day saw Peggy Thomson, the daughter of that house, engaged more probably in cutting a cabbage for the family dinner, than in imitating the 'flower-gathering Proserpine.' The sight seems to have been as a stroke of the sun to him, proving fatal to all serious study. He tells us of his writing a song on Peggy, who, as will subsequently be seen, became the wife of his friend, John Neilson of Kirkoswald; but there is reason to believe that the song was not written till some years afterwards, when his acquaintance with her was temporarily renewed.†

to Douglas Graham of the Shanter farm, but when they had moved to some distance from the coast, they were assailed by a strong gale from the east. Such a gale implied danger, but when Niven proposed that they should steer shoreward, Burns objected, jocularly remarking that he would not abandon his purpose, though the breeze should prove strong enough to "blaw the horns aff the kye" (cattle). At length he yielded to the advice of his more experienced companion, and reaching the shore, they effected a landing with some difficulty. Being now overtaken by a violent thunder-storm, accompanied by a heavy rainfall, they hastened for shelter to Shanter farmhouse, which stood near, and the occupants of which were on intimate terms with the Niven family. On reaching the homestead, they found that the farmer was absent at the horse-fair, but by his wife, Mrs Graham, they were cordially welcomed. As the storm continued, the friends remained till the evening. Careful and industrious as a domestic manager, Mrs Graham indulged a querulous temper, and spoke rashly. She expected her husband to return early in the evening, and as he failed to present himself, she energetically expatiated on his convivial irregularities, and, among other untoward vaticinations, assured the young men that she apprehended that some day he would fall into the Doon. Mrs Graham associated in her denunciation Johnie Davidson, the neighbouring shoemaker, who, as she informed her visitors, had accompanied her husband to Ayr to purchase leather for soles, to be used with their home-tanned skins in providing shoes for the family. In returning together to Ballochneil, Burns expatiated to his companion on the wanton censures of the gudewife, more especially in relation to her quaint expletives. Next morning, he seized a newspaper which lay in the apartment, and on the margin inscribed some lines with a pencil: it was his first draft of "Tam o' Shanter."'

* The sun enters Virgo—'a month which is always a carnival in my bosom'—on 23d August.

† In *Macmillan's Magazine* for June 1893, there appeared an interesting article on 'Burns

It is difficult to ascertain from his own statements, even with the aid of his brother's and sister's, the exact order of such early attempts at rhyme as have been preserved. In arranging them here, it is impossible to attain more than an approximation to accuracy. There is one song, which he says* he composed at seventeen; from its style, and from its resemblance, in both ideas and expressions, to Mrs Cockburn's 'Flowers of the Forest,' which was published in a collection (*The Lark*) possessed by Burns, it may be ranked with certainty as one of his earliest efforts.†

in Kirkoswald,' by Mr J. A. Westwood Oliver, whose father taught the 'noted school' about fifty years ago, and into whose hands there had come, from the descendants of Thomas Orr, a farmer near Kirkoswald—between whom and Burns an intimacy no doubt existed—a packet of papers, including a letter written by Burns in 1782 to his young friend, a brief letter, dated 1780, written by the poet's father, and some scraps of paper with verses on them. These pieces are in the handwriting, not of Burns, but of some one else, presumably Orr; and Mr Oliver speculates with much ingenuity on the possibility of one of them being a copy by Orr of a poem written by Burns when he had 'crazed the faculties of his soul' about the fair *Jillette*, and when he was reading Shenstone. The presence in the poem, however, of such 'desperately prosaic lines'—to use Mr Oliver's own phrase—as

'While the sons of debauch to indulgence give way,
And slumber the prime of their hours,
Let us, my dear Stella, the garden survey
And make our remarks on the flowers.

and

'Though Venus herself from her throne should descend,
And the Graces await at her call,
To thee the gay world would with preference bend,
And hail thee the violet of all,'

militates against such a possibility. Burns, even under the influence of Shenstone, would have thrown a little of himself into any verses of his own composition, as he did even in 'O once I lov'd a bonie lass.' Mr Oliver, however, does not dogmatise upon the authorship of the 'highly floral verses' he has published, but allows that they, like the 'Elegy' in Burns's handwriting, found in the Common-place Book presented by him to Mrs Dunlop, may have been copied from some collection of poems now unknown. This is, to say the least, not improbable. The influence upon Burns of other poets, including Thomson and Shenstone, both of whom he read, on his own showing, at Kirkoswald, is very clearly and fully traced under the title of 'Burns in a New Aspect,' by Mr J. Logie Robertson in his *Earth in Field*. The same subject is also dealt with at length in the late Professor Minto's *Literature of the Georgian Era*.

* 'These two stanzas I composed when I was seventeen, and are among the oldest of my printed pieces.'—*Glenriddel Notes.*

† Compare—

Lang or noon, loud tempests storming.—*Burns.*
Loud tempests storming before parting day.—*Mrs C.*

Swelling drumlie wave.—*Burns.*
Grow drumlie and dark.—*Mrs C.*

Tho' fickle fortune has deceiv'd me.—*Burns.*
O fickle Fortune, why this cruel sporting?—*Mrs C.*

I bear a heart shall support me still.—*Burns.*
Thy frowns cannot fear me, thy smiles cannot cheer me.—*Mrs C.*

I DREAM'D I LAY.

I dream'd I lay where flowers were springing
Gaily in the sunny beam;
List'ning to the wild birds singing,
By a falling, crystal stream:
Straight the sky grew black and daring;
Thro' the woods the whirlwinds rave;
Trees with aged arms were warring,
O'er the swelling drumlie wave. turbid

Such was my life's deceitful morning,
Such the pleasures I enjoy'd;
But lang or noon, loud tempests storming, ere
A' my flowery bliss destroy'd.
Tho' fickle fortune has deceiv'd me—
She promis'd fair, and perform'd but ill,
Of mony a joy and hope bereav'd me—
I bear a heart shall support me still.

To the Mount Oliphant period of Burns's life may also be assigned the writing of a song which gives a foretaste of his satiric power:

TIBBIE, I HAE SEEN THE DAY.

TUNE—*Invercauld's Reel.*

Chorus.—O Tibbie, I hae seen the day
Ye wadna been sae shy;
For laik o' gear ye lightly me, lack—goods—slight
But, trowth, I care na by.

Yestreen I met you on the moor,
Ye spak na, but gaed by like stoure; dust
Ye geck at me because I'm poor, mock
But fient a hair care I.

When comin hame on Sunday last,
Upon the road as I cam past,
Ye snufft an gae your head a cast—
But trowth I care't na by.

I doubt na, lass, but ye may think,
Because ye hae the name o' clink, repute—money
That ye can please me at a wink,
Whene'er ye like to try.

But sorrow tak him that 's sae mean,
Altho' his pouch o' coin were clean,
Wha follows ony saucy quean, wench
That looks sae proud and high.

Altho' a lad were e'er sae smart,
If that he want the yellow dirt,
Ye 'll cast your head anither airt, direction
And answer him fu' dry.

But if he hae the name o' gear, wealth
Ye 'll fasten to him like a brier,
Tho' hardly he, for sense or lear, learning
Be better than the kye.

But, Tibbie, lass, tak my advice:
Your daddie's gear maks you sae nice;
The deil a ane wad spier your price,
Were ye as poor as I.

There lives a lass beside yon park,
I 'd rather hae her in her sark,
Than you, wi' a' your thousan mark; marks (money)
That gars you look sae high.*

He further tells us of an ambitious design which he had formed. He had sketched, he says, the outlines of a tragedy, and it was only the bursting of a cloud of family misfortunes that prevented him

* Burns, in one of the notes to the collection of his poems and letters known as 'The Glenriddel MSS.,' says, 'This song I composed about the age of seventeen,' and the conjecture has been hazarded that it may be connected with the incident thus alluded to in his autobiography: 'In my seventeenth year, to give my manners a brush, I went to a country dancing school.' Mrs Begg, on the other hand, declared positively that it was in his nineteenth year that he attended the dancing school, and that the Tibbie of the song was Isabella Stein (or Steven), who lived at Little Hill, a farm which marched with Lochlea.

from carrying out the design. At that time he wrote down nothing, so that nearly the whole escaped his memory. 'The following,' he says, 'was an exclamation from a great character—great in occasional instances of generosity, and daring at times in villainies. He is supposed to meet with a child of misery, and exclaims to himself:

"All devil* as I am, a damnèd wretch,
A hardened, stubborn, unrepenting villain,†
Still my heart melts at human wretchedness;
And with sincere tho' unavailing sighs,
I view the helpless children of distress:
With tears indignant I behold the oppressor
Rejoicing in the honest man's destruction,
Whose unsubmitting heart was all his crime.
Ev'n you, ye hapless crew, I pity you;
Ye, whom the seeming good think sin to pity;
Ye poor, despised, abandoned vagabonds,
Whom Vice, as usual, has turn'd o'er to ruin.
Oh! but for friends and interposing Heaven,
I had been driven forth like you forlorn,
The most detested, worthless wretch among you!
O injured God! Thy goodness has endow'd me
With talents passing most of my compeers,
Which I in just proportion have abused—
As far surpassing other common villains
As Thou in natural parts has given me more."'

'The oppressor,' there is every reason to believe, was the factor whose lot it was to put the law in force against poor William Burnes for the arrears of his Mount Oliphant rent.‡ Finally, one of his admittedly early songs so obviously expresses the sentiments of the poet's father after the farm at Mount Oliphant 'proved a ruinous bargain' that it may be introduced here.

* Variation—villain. † Variation—sinner.

‡ The three youngest of the seven children of William Burnes and Agnes Broun were born in Mount Oliphant. The dates of the births of the seven are, according to the Family Bible—Robert, 25th January 1759; Gilbert, 28th September 1760; Agnes, 30th September 1762; Annabella, 14th November 1764; William, 30th July 1767; John, 10th July 1769; and Isabel (who afterwards became Mrs Begg), 27th June 1771.

THE RUINED FARMER.—'IT'S O, FICKLE FORTUNE, O!'

TUNE.—*Go from my window, Love, do.*

The sun he is sunk in the west,
All creatures retirèd to rest,
While here I sit, all sore beset,
With sorrow, grief, and woe:
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

The prosperous man is asleep,
Nor hears how the whirlwinds sweep;
But Misery and I must watch
The surly tempest blow:
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

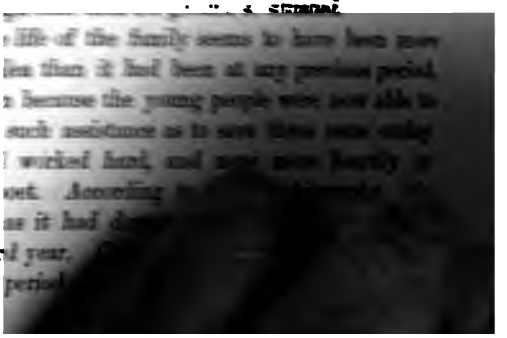
There lies the dear partner of my breast;
Her cares for a moment at rest:
Must I see thee, my youthful pride,
Thus brought so very low!
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

There lie my sweet babes in her arms;
No anxious fear their hearts alarms;
But for their sake my heart does ache,
With many a bitter throe:
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

I once was by Fortune carest:
I once could relieve the distrest:
Now life's poor support, hardly earn'd,
My fate will scarce bestow:
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

No comfort, no comfort I have!
How welcome to me were the grave!
But then my wife and children dear—
O, whither would they go!
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!

O whither, O where shall I turn!
All friendless, forsaken, forlorn!
For, in this world, Rest or Peace
I never more shall know!
And it's O, fickle Fortune, O!



'The seven years we lived in Tarbolton parish (extending from the seventeenth to the twenty-fourth of my brother's age*) were not marked by much literary improvement; but during this time the foundation was laid of certain habits in my brother's character, which afterwards became but too prominent, and which malice and envy have taken delight to enlarge on. Though, when young, he was bashful and awkward in his intercourse with women, yet when he approached manhood, his attachment to their society became very strong, and he was constantly the victim of some fair enslaver. The symptoms of his passion were often such as nearly to equal those of the celebrated Sappho. I never indeed knew that he *fainted, sunk, and died away;* but the agitation of his mind and body exceeded anything of the kind I ever knew in real life. He had always a particular jealousy of people who were richer than himself, or who had more consequence in life. His love, therefore, rarely settled on persons of this description. When he selected any one out of the sovereignty of his good pleasure to whom he should pay his particular attention, she was instantly invested with a sufficient stock of charms out of the plentiful stores of his own imagination; and there was often a great disparity between his fair captivator and her attributes. One generally reigned paramount in his affections; but as Yorick's affections flowed out toward Madame de L—— at the remise door, while the eternal vows of Eliza were upon him, so Robert was frequently encountering other attractions, which formed so many under-plots in the drama of his love. As these connections were governed by the strictest rules of virtue and modesty (from which he never deviated till he reached his twenty-third year), he became anxious to be in a situation to marry. This was not likely to be soon the case while he remained a farmer, as the stocking of a farm required a sum of money he had no probability of being master of for a great while. He began, therefore, to think of trying some other line of life. He and I had for some years taken land of my father for the purpose of raising [illegible] our own account. In the course of selling it, Robert [illegible] of turning flax-dresser, with a view of settling in life, and as preparatory thereto, he learned, accordingly, wrought at the trade for six months, but abandoned it before the twenty-sixth.

it at that period, as neither agreeing with his health nor inclination. In Irvine he had contracted some acquaintance of a freer manner of thinking and living than he had been used to, whose society prepared him for overleaping the bounds of rigid virtue which had hitherto restrained him. Towards the end of the period under review, and soon after his father's death, he was furnished with the subject of his "Epistle to John Rankine." During this period also he became a Freemason, which was his first introduction to the life of a boon-companion. Yet, notwithstanding these circumstances, and the praise he has bestowed on Scotch drink (which seems to have misled his historians), I do not recollect, during these seven years, nor till towards the end of his commencing author (when his growing celebrity occasioned his being often in company), to have ever seen him intoxicated; nor was he at all given to drinking.'

Of the first three or four years of the poet's life at Lochlea we have no details. Very few of his published compositions can be traced with certainty to this period. It was a time of comparative comfort for the Burnes family, although their daily life did not become less laborious. The family was regarded in the district as a remarkable one. They lived a more secluded life than is common in their class. Their superior intelligence and refinement, and a certain air of self-respect which they wore amidst all the drudgeries of their situation, gave them a high standing in the locality. Country neighbours who happened to enter their family-room (the kitchen) at the dinner-hour were surprised to find them all—father, brothers, and sisters—sitting each with a book in one hand and a spoon in the other. Gilbert Burns used to speak as if he, at all events, had thought more of his brother at this period than at any other. He recalled with delight the days when they had to go with one or two companions to cut peats for the winter fuel, because Robert was sure to enliven their work with a rattling fire of witty remarks on men and things. Not even those volumes which afterwards took the country by storm moved Gilbert's admiration of his brother more than these conversations in the bog, where two or three peasants made the audience. Robert was not the only member of the family who had literary sympathies, although he alone had the supreme literary faculty. Agnes, as she sat with her two sisters, Annabella

and Isabella, milking the cows, would delight them by reciting the poetry with which her mind was stored—as the ballad of 'Sir James the Rose,' the 'Flowers of the Forest,' or the Second Version of the 145th Psalm, in the Scottish translation. Gilbert was nearly as noted in the neighbourhood as Robert for his knowledge of English literature, limited as it was. Robert, however, was the greater favourite with all who came into close contact with the brothers, because of his kindly disposition and good temper. A female cousin of theirs, who had helped them in the work of their farm when a very young girl, used to tell that, when binding behind the reapers on the harvest-field, Robert 'was always anxious to solace and cheer, and assist the younger labourers. When Gilbert spoke sharply to them, the good-natured poet would exclaim: "Oh, man, ye are no for young folk;" and he was ready with a helping-hand and a look of encouragement.'*

There was upon the farm a little child named David Hutcheson, the 'Wee Davock' of one of the poems, to whom, according to tradition, Burns was especially attentive, carrying him home from the field on his shoulders, teaching him English at night. Burns, in fact, took care of 'Wee Davock' till he was old enough to earn a livelihood. The manner of the poet was not, however, attractive, at all events to the ordinary visitor to the household at Lochlea. Dr John Mackenzie, who attended William Burnes in a professional capacity in 1783, and subsequently became the warm friend of the poet, says: 'Gilbert, in the first interview I had with him at Lochlea, was frank, modest, well informed, and communicative. The poet seemed distant, suspicious, and without any wish to interest or please. He kept himself very silent in a dark corner of the room; and before he took any part in the conversation, I frequently detected him scrutinising me during my conversation with his father and brother.' Afterwards, 'when the conversation, which was on a medical subject, had taken the turn he wished, he began to engage in it, displaying a dexterity of reasoning, an ingenuity of reflection, and a familiarity with topics apparently beyond his reach, by which his visitor was no less gratified than astonished.'†

* From 'A Ramble among the Scenery of Burns,' in *The Highland Note-book*, by Dr Robert Carruthers, Inverness.

† Walker's *Life of Burns*. Dr Mackenzie communicated this information to Professor Walker in 1810.

The love affairs of the Scottish peasantry were, in those days, and in some districts are still, conducted in a manner peculiar to themselves. The young farmer or ploughman, after his day of exhausting labour, would proceed to the home of his 'lass,' one, two, three, or more miles distant, summon her by signal to the door, and then the pair would seat themselves in the barn for an hour or two's conversation. In the parish of Tarbolton, Robert Burns both launched into this mode of courtship himself, and acted as the second of other night-hunting swains.* Gilbert declares that he was not aspiring in his loves. He made no distinction between farmers' daughters and servants; there was, indeed, no real class distinction, the servants being often themselves the daughters of farmers, sent out to service only when they could be dispensed with at home. One who was a companion of the poet in these early days, and long survived him, declared that he 'composed a song on almost every tolerable-looking lass in the parish, and, finally, one in which they were all included.' The following off-hand verses, which an invincible tradition attributes to the poet, can scarcely indeed be considered as a song, and they are strikingly inferior to his average efforts:

THE TARBOLTON LASSES.

If ye gae up to yon hill-tap,
  Ye 'll there see bonie Peggy;
She kens her father is a laird,
  And she forsooth 's a leddy.

There 's Sophy tight, a lassie bright
  Besides a handsome fortune:
Wha canna win her in a night,
  Has little art in courtin.

Gae down by Faile, and taste the ale,
  And tak a look o' Mysie;
She 's dour and din, a deil within, obstinate—dun-coloured
  But aiblins she may please ye. perhaps

* John Lees, shoemaker, Tarbolton, used to tell how, as a stripling, he had acted as Burns's second in his courting expeditions. The old man spoke with much glee of the aid he had given the poet in the way of *asking out* lasses for him. When he had succeeded in bringing the girl out of doors, Burns would say: 'Now, Jock, ye may gang hame.'

If she be shy, her sister try,
  Ye 'll maybe fancy Jenny;
If ye 'll dispense wi' want o' sense—
  She kens hersel she 's bonie.

As ye gae up by yon hillside,
  Speer in for bonie Bessy;
She 'll gie ye a beck, and bid ye light, courtesy
  And handsomely address ye.

There 's few sae bonie, nane sae guid,
  In a' King George' dominion;
If ye should doubt the truth o' this—
  It 's Bessy's ain opinion!

Singularly enough, in this Herrick-like list of local beauties we miss the names of Jean and Anne Ronald, who lived at the Bennals, a farm in Tarbolton parish, about five miles from Lochlea, and close to Afton Lodge. Their father, William Ronald, who was reputed to be a man of wealth, owned as well as occupied his farm, which extended to about 200 acres, and was worth between £200 and £300 a year. Ronald was therefore termed 'a laird.' Robert and Gilbert Burns were intimate with the family. The story goes that the younger of the brothers was attracted by the elder of the sisters, and desired to marry her, but that, owing to his poverty, she refused him, preferring another neighbouring farmer, John Reid of Langlands, whom she ultimately married. Robert admired the younger sister, but was not sufficiently enamoured of her to risk the rejection of his overtures in a manner which would have offended his pride. This appears from the following verses, the 'satiric seasoning' of which is certainly more notable than *un penchant à l'adorable moitié du genre humain*:

THE RONALDS OF THE BENNALS.

In Tarbolton, ye ken, there are proper young men,
  And proper young lasses and a', man;
But ken ye the Ronalds that live in the Bennals,
  They carry the gree frae them a', man. palm

Their father 's a laird, and weel he can spare 't,
  Braid money to tocher them a', man; marriage-portion
To proper young men, he 'll clink in the hand count
  Gowd guineas a hunder or twa, man.

There 's ane they ca' Jean, I 'll warrant ye 've seen
  As bonie a lass or as braw, man;
But for sense and guid taste she 'll vie wi' the best,
  And a conduct that beautifies a', man.

The charms o' the min', the langer they shine, mind
  The mair admiration they draw, man;
While peaches and cherries, and roses and lilies,
  They fade and they wither awa, man.

If ye be for Miss Jean, tak this frae a frien',
  A hint o' a rival or twa, man;
The laird o' Blackbyre wad gang through the fire,
  If that wad entice her awa, man.

The Laird o' Braehead has been on his speed,
  For mair than a towmond or twa, man; twelvemonth
The Laird o' the Ford * will straught on a board, be stretched in death
  If he canna get her at a', man.

Then Anna comes in, the pride o' her kin,
  The boast of our bachelors a', man:
Sae sonsy and sweet, sae fully complete, comely
  She steals our affections awa, man.

If I should detail the pick and the wale choice
  O' lasses that live here awa, man,
The fau't wad be mine, if she didna shine
  The sweetest and best o' them a', man.

I lo'e her mysel, but darena weel tell,
  My poverty keeps me in awe, man;
For making o' rhymes, and working at times,
  Does little or naething at a', man.

* Possibly Failford, near Tarbolton.

Yet I wadna choose to let her refuse,
Or hae 't in her power to say na, man:
For though I be poor, unnoticed, obscure,
My stomach 's as proud as them a', man.

Though I canna ride in weel-booted pride,
And flee o'er the hills like a craw, man,
I can haud up my head wi' the best o' the breed,
Though fluttering ever so braw, man. brave

My coat and my vest, they are Scotch o' the best,
O' pairs o' guid breeks I hae twa, man; breeches
And stockings and pumps to put on my stumps,
And ne'er a wrang steek in them a', man. stitch

My sarks they are few, but five o' them new, shirts
Twal' hundred,* as white as the snaw, man,
A ten shillings hat, a Holland cravat;
There are no mony poets sae braw, man.

I never had freens weel stockit in means,
To leave me a hundred or twa, man;
Nae weel-tocher'd aunts, to wait on their drants, well-dowered —long prayers
And wish them in hell for it a', man.

I never was cannie for hoarding o' money, prudent
Or claughtin 't together at a', man; grasping
I 've little to spend, and naething to lend,
But deevil a shilling I awe, man.

* * * *

To the earlier portion of the Lochlea period are now generally attributed three of the minor pieces of Burns. The first is:

AH, WOE IS ME, MY MOTHER DEAR.†

Paraphrase of Jeremiah, 15th chap., 10th verse.

Ah, woe is me, my Mother dear!
A man of strife ye 've born me:
For sair contention I maun bear;
They hate, revile, and scorn me.

* A kind of cloth, woven in a web of twelve hundred divisions.

† These verses are given in the Glenriddel MSS., preserved at Liverpool, without any

I ne'er could lend on bill or band,
That five per cent. might bless me;
And borrowing, on the tither hand,
The deil a ane wad trust me.

Yet I, a coin-denièd wight,
By Fortune quite discarded;
Ye see how I am, day and night,
By lad and lass blackguarded!

The second is:

MONTGOMERIE'S PEGGY.*

Altho' my bed were in yon muir,
Amang the heather, in my plaidie;
Yet happy, happy would I be,
Had I my dear Montgomerie's Peggy.

When o'er the hill beat surly storms,
And winter nights were dark and rainy;
I'd seek some dell, and in my arms
I'd shelter dear Montgomerie's Peggy.

Were I a Baron proud and high,
And horse and servants waiting ready;
Then a' 'twad gie o' joy to me—
The shairin 't with Montgomerie's Peggy.

The third piece is:

THE PLOUGHMAN'S LIFE.†

As I was a-wand'ring ae morning in spring,
I heard a young ploughman sae sweetly to sing;
And as he was singin', thir words he did say—
There 's nae life like the ploughman's in the month o' sweet May.

indication as to the date of their composition. An imperfect copy of them was published in 1834 by James Hogg.

* According to Mrs Begg, 'Montgomerie's Peggy' was housekeeper at Coilsfield House, and Burns met her frequently. 'They sat in the same church, and contracted an intimacy together; but she was engaged to another before ever they met.' Burns himself speaks lightly of this intimacy: 'I began the affair merely in a *gaieté de cœur*, and to tell the truth (which would scarcely be believed), a vanity of showing my parts in courtship, particularly my abilities at a *billet-doux*, which I always piqued myself upon, made me lay siege to her.'

† This is one of the pieces which were published as Burns's in Cromek's *Reliques*. Gilbert was very doubtful of its genuineness.

The lav'rock in the morning she 'll rise frae her nest,
And mount i' the air wi' the dew on her breast,
And wi' the merry ploughman she 'll whistle and sing,
And at night she 'll return to her nest back again.

Mingled with these moods of tenderness and raillery, there were doubtless others dominated by deeper and more permanent emotions. The story of Wallace, as reduced by Hamilton of Gilbertfield from the ancient poem of Blind Harry, had made a great impression on Burns's mind. He tells us that, in his earlier years, he often stole out after the labours of the day to spend a solitary hour of tearful sympathy over the tale of 'Scotia's ill-requited chief.' One couplet relative to an adventure which took place near his own locality had struck him:

> Syne to the Leglen Wood, when it was late,
> To make a silent and a safe retreat.

'I chose,' he says, 'a fine summer Sunday, the only day my life allowed, and walked half-a-dozen miles to pay my respects to the Leglen Wood, with as much enthusiasm as ever pilgrim did to Loretto; and as I explored every den and dell where I could suppose my heroic countryman to have lodged, I recollect—for even then I was a rhymer—that my heart glowed with a wish to be able to make a song on him in some measure equal to his merits.' Or, as he subsequently expressed this aspiration:

> Ev'n then, a wish (I mind its pow'r)—
> A wish that to my latest hour
> Shall strongly heave my breast,
> That I for poor auld Scotland's sake
> Some usefu' plan or beuk could make,
> Or sing a sang at least.
> The rough burr-thistle, spreading wide
> Amang the bearded bear,
> I turn'd the weeder-clips aside,
> An' spar'd the symbol dear.

Towards the close of 1780, when the poet was completing his twenty-second year, we find a new exhibition of his intellectual activity in the institution of a debating club at the village of

Tarbolton. The following document, afterwards written in the book of the club, gives an account of this laudable association:

'HISTORY OF THE RISE, PROCEEDINGS, AND REGULATIONS OF THE BACHELORS' CLUB.

Of birth or blood we do not boast,
Nor gentry does our club afford;
But ploughmen and mechanics we
In Nature's simple dress record.*

'As the great end of human society is to become wiser and better, this ought, therefore, to be the principal view of every man in every station of life. But as experience has taught us that such studies as inform the head and mend the heart, when long continued, are apt to exhaust the faculties of the mind, it has been found proper to relieve and unbend the mind by some employment or another, that may be agreeable enough to keep its powers in exercise, but at the same time not so serious as to exhaust them. But, superadded to this, by far the greater part of mankind are under the necessity *of earning the sustenance of human life by the labour of their bodies*, whereby not only the faculties of the mind, but the nerves and sinews of the body, are so fatigued, that it is absolutely necessary to have recourse to some amusement or diversion, to relieve the wearied man worn down with the necessary labours of life.

'As the best of things, however, have been perverted to the worst of purposes, so, under the pretence of amusement and diversion, men have plunged into all the madness of riot and dissipation; and instead of attending to the grand design of human life, they have begun with extravagance and folly, and ended with guilt and wretchedness. Impressed with these considerations, we, the following lads in the parish of Tarbolton—namely, Hugh Reid, Robert Burness, Gilbert Burness, Alexander Brown, Walter Mitchell, Thomas Wright, and William M'Gavin—resolved, for our mutual entertainment, to unite ourselves into a club or society, under such rules and regulations that, while we should forget our cares and labours in mirth and diversion, we might not transgress the bounds of innocence and decorum; and after agreeing on these and some other regulations, we held our first meeting at Tarbolton, in the house of John Richard, upon the evening of the 11th November 1780, commonly called Hallowe'en, and after choosing Robert Burness president for the night, we proceeded to debate on this question—"Suppose a young man, bred a farmer, but without any fortune, has it in his power to marry either of two women, the one a girl of large fortune, but neither handsome in person nor agreeable in conversation, but who can manage the household affairs of a farm well enough; the other of

* 'These lines are by David Sillar.'—*Professor Walker.* The authorship of the prose which follows is uncertain.

them a girl every way agreeable in person, conversation, and behaviour, but without any fortune—which of them shall he choose?" Finding ourselves very happy in our society, we resolved to continue to meet once a month in the same house, in the way and manner proposed; and shortly thereafter we chose Robert Ritchie for another member. In May 1781, we brought in David Sillar, and in June, Adam Jamieson, as members. About the beginning of the year 1782, we admitted Matthew Patterson and John Orr; and in June following, we chose James Patterson as a proper brother for such a society. The club being thus increased, we resolved to meet at Tarbolton on the race-night, the July following, and have a dance in honour of our society. Accordingly, we did meet, each one with a partner, and spent the evening in such innocence and merriment, such cheerfulness and good-humour, that every brother will long remember it with pleasure and delight.'

The rules of this club excluded religious subjects only from discussion. The tenth, and last, is full of the spirit of Burns:

Every man proper for a member of this society must have a frank, honest, open heart; above anything dirty or mean; and must be a professed lover of one or more of the female sex. No haughty, self-conceited person, who looks upon himself as superior to the rest of the club, and especially no mean-spirited, worldly mortal, whose only will is to heap up money, shall upon any pretence whatever be admitted. In short, the proper person for this society is a cheerful, honest-hearted lad, who, if he has a friend that is true, and a mistress that is kind, and as much wealth as genteelly to make both ends meet, is just as happy as this world can make him.

Dr Currie found in Burns's papers some detached memoranda, showing that he took some care to prepare himself for the debates. Amongst others, were the heads of a speech on the *imprudent* side of the question for the opening night. The following were among the questions debated in the Club: 'Whether do we derive more happiness from love or friendship?' 'Whether between friends, who have no reason to doubt each other's friendship, there should be any reserve.' 'Whether is the savage man or the peasant of a civilised country in the most happy situation?' 'Whether is a young man of the lower ranks of life likeliest to be happy who has got a good education, and his mind well informed, or he who has just the education and information of those around him?'

David Sillar, mentioned in the history of the club as a new member in May 1781, was the son of Patrick Sillar, farmer at Spittleside, about two miles distant from Lochlea, and was

Burns's junior by a year. Although his education was by no means liberal,* he had poetical aspirations, and was, probably about the year 1780, brought into an intimacy with Burns, which lasted as long as the latter remained in Tarbolton parish. He has thus recorded his impressions of his friend: 'Mr Robert Burns was some time in the parish of Tarbolton prior to my acquaintance with him. His social disposition easily procured him acquaintance; but a certain satirical seasoning, with which he and all poetical geniuses are in some degree influenced, while it set the rustic circle in a roar, was not unaccompanied by its kindred attendant—suspicious fear. I recollect hearing his neighbours observe he had a great deal to say for himself, and that they suspected his *principles*. He wore the only tied hair in the parish; and in the church, his plaid, which was of a particular colour, I think *fillemot*,† he wrapped in a particular manner round his shoulders. These surmises, and his exterior, had such a magical influence on my curiosity, as made me particularly solicitous of his acquaintance. Whether my acquaintance with Gilbert was casual or premeditated, I am not now certain. By him I was introduced not only to his brother, but to the whole of that family, where, in a short time, I became a frequent, and, I believe, not unwelcome visitant.

'After the commencement of my acquaintance with the bard, we frequently met upon Sundays at church, when, between sermons, instead of going with our friends or lasses to the inn, we often took a walk in the fields. In these walks I have frequently been struck by his facility in addressing the fair sex; and many times, when I have been bashfully anxious how to express myself, he would have entered into conversation with them with the greatest ease and freedom; and it was generally a death-blow to our conversation, however agreeable, to meet a female acquaintance. Some of the few opportunities of a noontide walk that a country-life allows her laborious sons, he spent on the banks of the river, or in the woods

* Sillar thus alludes to his education in his poems (Kilmarnock, 1789):

I ne'er depended for my knowledge,
On school, academy, nor college,
I gat my learnin' at the flail,
An' some I catch'd at the plough-tail,
Amang the brutes I own I'm bred,
Since herding was my native trade.

† *Filemot*, or *philomot*, of the colour of a dead leaf, yellowish brown: from Fr. *feuille-morte*.

in the neighbourhood of Stair, a situation peculiarly adapted to the genius of a rural bard. Some book (especially one of those mentioned in his letter to Mr Murdoch) he always carried, and read when not otherwise employed. It was likewise his custom to read at table. In one of my visits to Lochlea, in time of a sowen* supper, he was so intent on reading, I think *Tristram Shandy*, that his spoon falling out of his hand, made him exclaim, in a tone scarcely imitable, "Alas, poor Yorick!" He had in his youth paid considerable attention to the arguments for and against the doctrine of original sin, then making considerable noise in the neighbourhood of Ayr; and having perused Dr Taylor's book on that subject, and also a book called *Letters concerning the Religion essential to Man*, his opinions, when he came to Tarbolton, were consequently favourable to what you Ayr people call the "moderate side." The religion of the people of Tarbolton at that time was purely that of their fathers, founded on the *Westminster Confession*, and taught by one generation to another, uncontaminated by reading, reflection, and conversation; and though divided into different sectaries, the *Shorter Catechism* was the line which bounded all their controversies. The slightest insinuation of Taylor's opinions made his neighbours suspect, and some even avoid him, as an heretical and dangerous companion. Such was Burns, and such were his associates, when, in May 1781, I was admitted a member of the Bachelors' Club.' †

The proceedings of the club suggest that Burns, when he had reached the age of twenty-two, had thought of marriage, for there can be little doubt that the first question was of his propounding. It is quite certain that about this time he had met a young woman on whose hand he had serious designs. This was Ellison, or Alison, Begbie, the daughter of a small farmer in the parish of Galston; she was now a servant in a family living on the

* Sowens, a mess composed of the farina gathered by steeping the husks of grain.

† Letter to Mr Aiken of Ayr, in Morison's edition of Burns.

'To David Sillar's statements we are able to add what has been told us by the members of an old Tarbolton family, whose grandparents often walked to and from Tarbolton Kirk in company with the poet. On such Sabbath walks, and also in the *kirkyaird* before service, the young ploughman-poet delighted in "getting up an argument." In these frequent and keen discussions, his opinions usually startled and sometimes irritated his rustic antagonists—sorely "puzzling their Calvinism." In short, as it has been expressed to us, his friends and neighbours "*couldna tell what to mak o' young Burns o' Lochlea.*"'—*Life of Robert Burns*, by Rev. J. C. Higgins, B.D., minister of Tarbolton.

banks of the Cessnock, about two miles from Lochlea. Ellison was not a beauty, though, as Burns himself says, she had many 'charming qualities, heightened by an education much beyond anything I have ever met in any woman I ever dared to approach.' On her he composed what he termed 'a song of similes'—a curious conceit in versification, yet containing many exquisite lines:

THE LASS OF CESSNOCK BANKS.

TUNE—*If he be a Butcher neat and trim.*

On Cessnock banks a lassie dwells;
Could I describe her shape and mien;
Our lasses a' she far excels,
An' she has twa sparkling rogueish een.

She 's sweeter than the morning dawn,
When rising Phœbus first is seen;
And dew-drops twinkle o'er the lawn;
An' she has twa sparkling rogueish een.

She 's stately like yon youthful ash,
That grows the cowslip braes between,
And drinks the stream with vigour fresh;
An' she has twa sparkling rogueish een.

She 's spotless like the flow'ring thorn,
With flow'rs so white and leaves so green,
When purest in the dewy morn;
An' she has twa sparkling rogueish een.

Her looks are like the vernal May,
When ev'ning Phœbus shines serene,
While birds rejoice on every spray;
An' she has twa sparkling rogueish een.

Her hair is like the curling mist
That climbs the mountain-sides at e'en,
When flow'r-reviving rains are past;
An' she has twa sparkling rogueish een.

Her forehead 's like the show'ry bow,
When gleaming sunbeams intervene
And gild the distant mountain's brow;
An' she has twa sparkling rogueish een.

Her cheeks are like yon crimson gem,
The pride of all the flowery scene,
Just opening on its thorny stem;
An' she has twa sparkling rogueish een.

Her bosom 's like the nightly snow,
When pale the morning rises keen;
While hid the murm'ring streamlets flow;
An' she has twa sparkling rogueish een.

Her lips are like yon cherries ripe
That sunny walls from Boreas screen—
They tempt the taste and charm the sight;
An' she has twa sparkling rogueish een.

Her teeth are like a flock of sheep,
With fleeces newly washen clean,
That slowly mount the rising steep;
An' she has twa sparkling rogueish een.

Her breath is like the fragrant breeze
That gently stirs the blossom'd bean,
When Phœbus sinks behind the seas;
An' she has twa sparkling rogueish een.

Her voice is like the ev'ning thrush
That sings on Cessnock banks unseen,
While his mate sits nestling in the bush;
An' she has twa sparkling rogueish een.

But it 's not her air, her form, her face,
Tho' matching beauty's fabled queen;
'Tis the mind that shines in ev'ry grace,
An' chiefly in her rogueish een.

Mrs Begg used to tell that her brother went frequently of an evening to visit Ellison, and as he did not as a rule return till a late hour, his father at length became alarmed at the irregularity of his habits. The old man resolved one night to administer to his son the practical rebuke of sitting up to let him in, and also to give him a few words of advice. When Robert returned, his father was lying in wait for him. On being asked what had detained him so long, the poet began a whimsical account of what he had met with and seen of natural and supernatural on his way home, concluding with the particulars afterwards wrought up in the well-known verses in his 'Address to the Deil:'

Ae dreary, windy, winter night,
The stars shot down wi' sklentin light,
Wi' you mysel, I gat a fright,
Ayont the lough;
Ye, like a rash-bush, stood in sight,
Wi' wavin sough.

The cudgel in my nieve did shake,
Each bristl'd hair stood like a stake,
When wi' an eldrich, stoor 'quaick, quaick,'
Amang the springs,
Awa ye squatter'd like a drake,
On whistlin wings.

The old man was, in spite of himself, so much interested and amused by this recital, as to forget the intended scolding, and the affair ended in his sitting up for an hour or two by the kitchen fire enjoying the conversation of his gifted son.

Probably the earliest specimens of Burns's prose composition that are in existence are a series of letters to Ellison Begbie, possibly written in the winter of 1780–81—slightly pedantic in manner, as might be expected of a young genius still walking by the light of a *vade-mecum* of epistolary correspondence, and striving to educate himself by means of a debating-club, yet remarkable as the compositions of a young farmer addressed to a servant-girl:*

* Dr Currie printed this series of letters in his first edition of the poet's works, as 'written about the year 1780.' They were withdrawn from subsequent editions, for what reason does not appear. Allan Cunningham included them in his edition, with the conjectural date 1783, which is too late.

TO ELLISON BEGBIE.

MY DEAR E.—I do not remember, in the course of your acquaintance and mine, ever to have heard your opinion on the ordinary way of falling in love, amongst people of our station of life: I do not mean the persons who proceed in the way of bargain, but those whose affection is really placed on the person.

Though I be, as you know very well, but a very awkward lover myself, yet as I have some opportunities of observing the conduct of others who are much better skilled in the affair of courtship than I am, I often think it is owing to lucky chance more than to good management, that there are not more unhappy marriages than usually are.

It is natural for a young fellow to like the acquaintance of the females, and customary for him to keep their company when occasion serves: some one of them is more agreeable to him than the rest—there is something, he knows not what, pleases him, he knows not how, in her company. This I take to be what is called *Love* with the greatest part of us; and I must own, my dear E., it is a hard game such a one as you have to play, when you meet with such a lover. You cannot admit but he is sincere, and yet, though you use him ever so favourably, perhaps in a few months, or at farthest a year or two, the same unaccountable fancy may make him as distractedly fond of another, whilst you are quite forgot. I am aware that perhaps the next time I have the pleasure of seeing you, you may bid me take my own lesson home, and tell me that the passion I have professed for you is perhaps one of those transient flashes I have been describing; but I hope, my dear E., you will do me the justice to believe me, when I assure you that the love I have for you is founded on the sacred principles of virtue and honor, and by consequence, so long as you continue possessed of those amiable qualities which first inspired my passion for you, so long must I continue to love you. Believe me, my dear, it is love like this alone which can render the married state happy. People may talk of flames and raptures as long as they please—and a warm fancy, with a flow of youthful spirits, may make them feel something like what they describe; but sure I am, the nobler faculties of the mind, with kindred feelings of the heart, can only be the foundation of friendship; and it has always been my opinion that the married life is only *Friendship* in a more exalted degree.

If you will be so good as to grant my wishes, and it should please Providence to spare us to the latest periods of life, I can look forward and see, that even then, though bent down with wrinkled age—even then, when all other worldly circumstances will be indifferent to me, I will regard my E. with the tenderest affection; and for this plain reason—because she is still possessed of those noble qualities, improved to a much higher degree, which first inspired my affection for her.

O happy state, when souls each other draw,
Where love is liberty, and nature law!

I know, were I to speak in such a style to many a girl who thinks herself possessed of no small share of sense, she would think it ridiculous; but the language of the heart is, my dear E., the only courtship I shall ever use to you.

When I look over what I have written, I am sensible it is vastly different from the ordinary style of courtship, but I shall make no apology—I know your good-nature will excuse what your good sense may see amiss. R. B.

TO THE SAME.

I verily believe, my dear E., that the pure, genuine feelings of love are as rare in the world as the pure, genuine principles of virtue and piety. This, I hope, will account for the uncommon style of all my letters to you. By uncommon, I mean their being written in such a serious manner, which, to tell you the truth, has made me often afraid lest you should take me for some zealous bigot, who conversed with his mistress as he would converse with his minister. I don't know how it is, my dear; for though, except your company, there is nothing on earth gives me so much pleasure as writing to you, yet it never gives me those giddy raptures so much talked of among lovers. I have often thought that if a well-grounded affection be not really a part of virtue, 'tis something extremely akin to it. Whenever the thought of my E. warms my heart, every feeling of humanity, every principle of generosity, kindles in my breast. It extinguishes every dirty spark of malice and envy, which are but too apt to infest me. I grasp every creature in the arms of universal benevolence, and equally participate in the pleasures of the happy, and sympathize with the miseries of the unfortunate. I assure you, my dear, I often look up to the Divine disposer of events, with an eye of gratitude for the blessing which I hope He intends to bestow on me, in bestowing you. I sincerely wish that He may bless my endeavours to make your life as comfortable and happy as possible, both in sweetening the rougher parts of my natural temper, and bettering the unkindly circumstances of my fortune. This, my dear, is a passion, at least in my view, worthy of a man, and, I will add, worthy of a Christian. The sordid earth-worm may profess love to a woman's person, whilst in reality his affection is centered in her pocket; and the slavish drudge may go a-wooing as he goes to the horse-market, to choose one who is stout and firm, and, as we may say of an old horse, one who will be a good drudge, and draw kindly. I disdain their dirty, puny ideas. I would be heartily out of humour with myself, if I thought I were capable of having so poor a notion of the sex which were designed to crown the pleasures of society. Poor devils! I don't envy them their happiness who have such notions. For my part, I propose quite other pleasures with my dear partner. . . . R. B.

TO THE SAME.

My Dear E.—I have often thought it a peculiarly unlucky circumstance in love, that, though in every other situation in life telling the truth is not only the safest, but actually by far the easiest way of proceeding, a lover is never under greater difficulty in acting, or more puzzled for expression, than when his passion is sincere, and his intentions are honourable. I do not think that it is very difficult for a person of ordinary capacity to talk of love and fondness which are not felt, and to make vows of constancy and fidelity which are never intended to be performed, if he be villain enough to practise such detestable conduct; but to a man whose heart glows with the principles of integrity and truth, and who sincerely loves a woman of amiable person, uncommon refinement of sentiment, and purity of manners—to such a one, in such circumstances, I can assure you, my dear, from my own feelings at this present moment, *Courtship* is a task indeed. There is such a number of foreboding fears, and distrustful anxieties crowd into my mind when I am in your company, or when I sit down to write to you, that what to speak or what to write I am altogether at a loss.

There is one rule which I have hitherto practised, and which I shall invariably keep with you, and that is, honestly to tell you the plain truth. There is something so mean and unmanly in the arts of dissimulation and falsehood, that I am surprised they can be used by any one in so noble, so generous a passion, as virtuous love. No, my dear E., I shall never endeavour to gain your favour by such detestable practices. If you will be so good and so generous as to admit me as your partner, your companion, your bosom-friend through life, there is nothing on this side of eternity shall give me greater transport; but I shall never think of purchasing your hand by any arts unworthy of a man, and I will add, of a Christian. There is one thing, my dear, which I earnestly request of you, and it is this—that you would soon either put an end to my hopes by a peremptory refusal, or cure me of my fears by a generous consent.

It would oblige me much if you would send me a line or two when convenient. I shall only add further, that if a behaviour regulated (though perhaps but very imperfectly) by the rules of honor and virtue, if a heart devoted to love and esteem you, and an earnest endeavour to promote your happiness—if these are qualities you would wish in a friend, in a husband, I hope you shall ever find them in your real friend and sincere lover, R. B.

It has been conjectured that the following letter, which is undoubtedly Burns's composition, may have been addressed to Ellison Begbie, and may have preceded the three which have already been given:

What you may think of this letter, when you see the name that

subscribes it, I cannot know; and perhaps I ought to make a long preface of apologies for the freedom I am going to take; but as my heart means no offence, but on the contrary is rather too warmly interested in your favour; for that reason I hope you will forgive me when I tell you that I most sincerely and affectionately love you. I am a stranger in these matters, A——, as I assure you that you are the first woman to whom I ever made such a declaration; so I declare I am at a loss how to proceed.

I have more than once come into your company with a resolution to say what I have just now told you; but my resolution always failed me, and even now, my heart trembles for the consequence of what I have said. I hope, my dear A——, you will not despise me because I am ignorant of the flattering arts of courtship: I hope my inexperience of the world will plead for me. I can only say I sincerely love you, and there is nothing on earth I so ardently wish for, or could possibly give me so much happiness, as one day to see you mine.

I think you cannot doubt my sincerity, as I am sure that whenever I see you, my very looks betray me; and when once you are convinced I am sincere, I am perfectly certain you have too much goodness and humanity to allow an honest man to languish in suspense, only because he loves you too well. And, I am certain that in such a state of anxiety, as I myself at present feel, an absolute denial would be a much preferable state.*

The removal of the poet to Irvine to learn flax-dressing, or 'heckling,' took place at midsummer 1781. He says in his autobiography that he took this step partly through whim, and partly because he wished to set about 'doing something' in life. Gilbert is more explicit, and tells us that Robert, being anxious to be in a situation to marry, thought of turning flax-dresser, both as being suitable 'to his grand view of settling in life,' and as being subservient to the brothers' venture of raising flax on their father's farm. So far as his union with Ellison Begbie was in view, the plan was nugatory, for it appears to have been just before his removal to Irvine that he had occasion to write the following letter:

TO ELLISON BEGBIE.

I ought, in good-manners, to have acknowledged the receipt of your letter before this time, but my heart was so shocked with the contents of it, that I can scarcely yet collect my thoughts so as to write to you on the

* Mr Scott Douglas, who first published (*The Works of Robert Burns*, vol. iv., William Paterson & Co.) this letter in 1878, from the manuscript then in the possession of the late Mr John Adam, of Greenock, while inclined to believe that 'it forms number one of the series of letters to E. B., of date 1780–1781,' also admits that 'it is impossible to determine from internal evidence whether the writer of it speaks for himself, or is merely helping some one of his less able rustic brethren, by dictating a love-letter for him.'

subject. I will not attempt to describe what I felt on receiving your letter. I read it over and over, again and again, and though it was in the politest language of refusal, still it was peremptory: 'you were very sorry you could not make me a return, but you wish me'—what, without you, I never can obtain—'you wish me all kind of happiness.' It would be weak and unmanly to say that without you I never can be happy; but sure I am, that sharing life with you would have given it a relish, that, wanting you, I never can taste.

Your uncommon personal advantages, and your superior good sense, do not so much strike me; these, possibly, in a few instances may be met with in others; but that amiable goodness, that tender, feminine softness, that endearing sweetness of disposition, with all the charming offspring of a warm feeling heart—these I never again expect to meet with, in such a degree, in this world. All these charming qualities, heightened by an education much beyond anything I have ever met in any woman I ever dared to approach, have made an impression on my heart that I do not think the world can ever efface. My imagination had fondly flattered myself with a wish, I dare not say it ever reached a hope, that possibly I might one day call you mine. I had formed the most delightful images, and my fancy fondly brooded over them; but now I am wretched for the loss of what I really had no right to expect. I must now think no more of you as a mistress, still I presume to ask to be admitted as a friend. As such I wish to be allowed to wait on you, and as I expect to remove in a few days a little farther off, and you, I suppose, will perhaps soon leave this place, I wish to see you or hear from you soon; and if an expression should perhaps escape me rather too warm for friendship, I hope you will pardon it in, my dear Miss—(pardon me the dear expression for once) . . . R. B.

The reason Ellison gave for refusing the poet's hand is unknown.

Burns, nevertheless, commenced his enterprise, though it is to be feared in a somewhat depressed state of spirits. Irvine,* a fairly prosperous seaport on the Firth of Clyde, about eleven miles from Ayr and thirty from Glasgow, then contained many small flax-dressing establishments, in connection with farms which were mainly, or in great part, devoted to flax-growing. Amongst these was one conducted by a young man of the name of Peacock, who is commonly understood to have been a distant relative of the poet's mother. Here Robert set himself to master a craft for which, it would appear, he had no natural bent. Peacock's 'heckling' house still stands, in a narrow crooked lane, known as Glasgow

* It is interesting to note that a hundred and fifty years ago Irvine was larger than Ayr. According to the *Statistical Account*, its population in 1755 was 4025, while that of Ayr was 2904.

Vennel, which runs east from the High Street, and in Burns's time was the only thoroughfare leading to the Glasgow Road. It is a thatched back building of the familiar Scottish 'but-and-ben' order. It has been said that Burns lived for a time in one of the rooms, the other being used as a workshop. The general belief in Irvine, however, is that the poet did not live in this house, but rented a room in another house on the same side of the Vennel, nearer the High Street. The initials 'R. B.,' with the date 1782, are carved in the stone mantelpiece of a kitchen in this tenement, and tradition has it that the carving was done by himself. Burns, so far as can be ascertained, had no landlady in Irvine, but attended to his own domestic wants. Peacock, it is understood, lived in a house (since pulled down and reconstructed) which stood in front of his shop, and was separated from it by a narrow passage. The exact relations between Burns and his partner are buried in mystery. It is possible that a few pounds were put into Peacock's business by the poet, or for him by his father, as payment for permission to learn a trade of which he was ignorant. He makes a grave, though not quite definite charge against Peacock. 'My partner,' he says, 'was a scoundrel of the first water, who made money by the mystery of Thieving.' The tradition in Irvine is that Burns and Peacock quarrelled over money matters, that they separated, and that Burns, while still lodging in the Glasgow Vennel, rented a room in the High Street, near the King's Arms Hotel, and himself carried on 'heckling' there.

But few anecdotes are told of Burns's residence in Irvine. Yet he did not pass unnoticed. His melancholy was much remarked. Amongst ordinary people he would, according to a statement made in 1826 by a man who knew him, sit for a considerable time with his head pillowed by his hand, and his elbow on his knee; it was only when the company was joined by some one of superior intelligence, or a young woman, that he brightened up. His powers of argument were thought extraordinary. As has been seen, he formed an acquaintance with a young sailor named Richard Brown,* who talked of women in a manner which, according to his own account, sapped his sternly virtuous principles. This lad, however, had sense

* 'The young men, in general, are sailors, or go abroad to the West Indies and America as storekeepers and planters.'– *Statistical Account.*

enough to appreciate the budding genius of his friend. Burns himself, when he had attained distinction, thus wrote to Brown, recalling those Irvine days: 'Do you recollect a Sunday we spent together in Eglinton woods? You told me, on my repeating some verses to you, that you wondered I could resist the temptation of sending verses of such merit to a magazine. It was from this remark I derived that idea of my own pieces which encouraged me to endeavour at the character of a poet.'* In Irvine, Burns met another man, who, many years after, spoke complacently to Professor Walker of having led him to take more liberal views of religious questions. A bookshop in the High Street, kept by a Mr Templeton (now a barber's shop) is said to have been visited almost daily by the poet. Mr Templeton subsequently collected and forwarded to Burns the money that was due him by the Irvine subscribers to the first edition of his poems. In these days, ballads were occasionally printed on slips of paper about the length of an ordinary newspaper column, and Mr Templeton used to tell that the poet's regular inquiry of him was if there 'was anything new in that line,' pointing to the slips of ballads. He would then seat himself on the counter, seize the strips, and read aloud such ballads as struck his fancy.

There is reason to believe that Burns attended the parish church of Irvine so long as he resided there. The daughter of the Rev. Mr Richmond, who was parish minister at the time, stated within living memory that her father was under the impression that the poet formally joined the church in Irvine. His name, however, is not to be found in the communion-roll of the congregation, or in the minutes of the kirk-session. Although Burns was taken but little notice of in Irvine, it would appear that he was not unknown to the family of the provost, Mr Hamilton of Craighlaw, whose house still stands at the corner where Glasgow Vennel and High Street meet. His son, Dr Hamilton, was one of the acquaintances of the poet who became security to the printer of the Kilmarnock edition.

Towards the close of the year, Burns suffered from a severe nervous affection, accompanied by extreme hypochondria, under the influence of which he wrote the following letter to his father:

* See letter of date December 30, 1787, *infra*.

IRVINE, *December* 27, 1781.

HONORED SIR—I have purposely delayed writing, in the hope that I should have the pleasure of seeing you on New-year's Day; but work comes so hard upon us, that I do not choose to be absent on that account, as well as for some other little reasons, which I shall tell you at meeting. My health is nearly the same as when you were here, only my sleep is a little sounder; and, on the whole, I am rather better than otherwise, though I mend by very slow degrees. The weakness of my nerves has so debilitated my mind, that I dare neither review past 'wants' nor look forward into futurity; for the least anxiety in my breast produces most unhappy effects on my whole frame. Sometimes, indeed, when for an hour or two my spirits are a little lightened, I *glimmer* a little into futurity; but my principal, and indeed my only pleasurable, employment, is looking backwards and forwards in a moral and religious way. I am quite transported at the thought that ere long, perhaps very soon, I shall bid an eternal adieu to all the pains, and uneasiness, and disquietudes of this weary life, for I assure you I am heartily tired of it; and, if I do not very much deceive myself, I could contentedly and gladly resign it.

> The soul, uneasy, and confined at home,
> Rests and expatiates in a life to come.

It is for this reason I am more pleased with the 15th, 16th, and 17th verses of the 7th chapter of Revelation, than with any ten times as many verses in the whole Bible, and would not exchange the noble enthusiasm with which they inspire me for all that this world has to offer.* As for this world, I despair of ever making a figure in it. I am not formed for the bustle of the busy, nor the flutter of the gay. I shall never again be capable of entering into such scenes. Indeed, I am altogether unconcerned at the thoughts of this life. I foresee that poverty and obscurity probably await me, and I am in some measure prepared, and daily preparing, to meet them. I have but just time and paper to return you my grateful thanks for the lessons of virtue and piety you have given me, which were too much neglected at the time of giving them, but which I hope have been remembered ere it was too late. Present my dutiful respects to my mother, and my compliments to Mr and Mrs Muir; and, with wishing you a merry New-year's Day, I shall conclude. I am, honored sir, your dutiful son,

ROBERT BURNESS.

P.S.—My meal is nearly out;† but I am going to borrow, till I get more.

* The verses of Scripture here alluded to are as follow:

15. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

16. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

17. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

† This seems to show that supplies of meal were sent to Burns from Lochlea.

It was probably at this time also—a time which he says he could not afterwards recall without a shudder—that he composed a series of poems expressive of deep suffering, including his 'Winter: a Dirge,' which he spoke of as the 'eldest of my printed pieces.'

WINTER: A DIRGE.

The wintry west extends his blast,
And hail and rain does blaw;
Or, the stormy north sends driving forth
The blinding sleet and snaw:
While,* tumbling brown, the burn comes down,
And roars frae bank to brae;
And bird and beast in covert rest,
And pass the heartless† day.

'The sweeping blast, the sky o'ercast,'‡
The joyless winter day
Let others fear, to me more dear
Than all the pride of May:
The tempest's howl, it soothes my soul,
My griefs it seems to join;
The leafless trees my fancy please,
Their fate resembles mine!

Thou Power Supreme, whose mighty scheme
These woes of mine fulfil,
Here, firm, I rest; they must be best,
Because they are *Thy* will!
Then all I want (O do Thou grant
This one request of mine!)
Since to *enjoy* Thou dost deny,
Assist me to *resign*.

In the same spirit, and indeed expressive of the same idea, is

* And—Variation in Common-place Book.
† Weary—Variation in Common-place Book.
‡ Young.

A PRAYER,

WRITTEN UNDER THE PRESSURE OF VIOLENT ANGUISH.

O Thou Great Being! what Thou art,
  Surpasses* me to know;
Yet sure I am, that known to Thee
  Are all Thy works† below.

Thy creature here before Thee stands,
  All wretched and distrest;
Yet sure those ills that wring‡ my soul
  Obey Thy high behest.

Sure Thou, Almighty, § canst not act
  From cruelty or wrath!
O, free my weary eyes from tears,
  Or close them fast in death!

But, if I must afflicted be,
  To suit some wise design;
Then|| man my soul with firm resolves,
  To bear and not repine!

On 1st January 1782, there occurred, according to the poet's autobiography, 'while we were giving a welcome carousal to the New Year,' the fire in the shop of his partner and himself, which led to the abandonment of his flax-dressing enterprise, and reduced him to absolute poverty.¶ It might be supposed from his own narrative that he immediately deserted the business and Irvine together; but there is good reason to believe that he did not return to Lochlea till the ensuing March.

* Surpassest—Variation in Common-place Book.
† All affairs—Variation in Common-place Book.
‡ Press—Variation in Common-place Book.
§ All-perfect—Variation in Common-place Book.
|| O!—Variation in Common-place Book.
¶ Burns's words, 'our shop,' would appear at first sight to place it beyond dispute that it was the shop in the Glasgow Vennel, in which he and Peacock are understood to have worked together, that was burned down. A different view, however, has long prevailed in Irvine. There the belief is held that the fire occurred in the shop in the High Street which, according to tradition, Burns rented after his rupture with Peacock. In 1850, the late Mr Hugh Alexander of Braidmead took down in writing a statement made by one John Boyd, then residing in Eglinton Street, who declared he had been an eye-witness of the

He tells us that about this time he hung his harp upon the willows. Shortly after his return to Lochlea and the plough, however, he took it down from those melancholy boughs, and strung it anew. One at least of its strains is of historic value, as indicating his prospects in life at this period:

MY FATHER WAS A FARMER.

TUNE—*The weaver and his shuttle, O.*

My father was a farmer upon the Carrick border,
And carefully he bred me in decency and order;
He bade me act a manly part, though I had ne'er a farthing;
For without an honest manly heart, no man was worth regarding.

Then out into the world my course I did determine;
Tho' to be rich was not my wish, yet to be great was charming:
My talents they were not the worst, nor yet my education;
Resolv'd was I, at least to try, to mend my situation.

In many a way, and vain essay, I courted Fortune's favour;
Some cause unseen still stept between, to frustrate each endeavour;
Sometimes by foes I was o'erpower'd, sometimes by friends forsaken;
And when my hope was at the top, I still was worst mistaken.

Then sore harass'd, and tir'd at last, with Fortune's vain delusion,
I dropt my schemes, like idle dreams, and came to this conclusion—
The past was bad, and the future hid—its good or ill untrièd;
But the present hour was in my pow'r, and so I would enjoy it.

No help, nor hope, nor view had I, nor person to befriend me;
So I must toil, and sweat, and moil, and labour to sustain me;
To plough and sow, to reap and mow, my father bred me early;
For one, he said, to labour bred, was a match for fortune fairly.

fire in the High Street, and who was under the impression that Burns himself accidentally set fire to his shop with a candle. Boyd's statement received confirmation in 1859 from Colonel Adam Fairlie, of Montreal, a native of Irvine, who, although between eighty and ninety years of age, was able to attend the centenary celebration there, and to make a speech. In the course of his remarks, he said he had been an eye-witness of the fire in Burns's shop, which was a few doors from the King's Arms Hotel in High Street. It is impossible to reconcile these positive statements, when taken along with the fact that the shop in Glasgow Vennel, which is universally believed to have been used by Peacock and Burns, still stands intact, with the poet's own equally decided declaration: 'Our shop, by the drunken carelessness of my partner's wife, took fire and burned to ashes, and I was left, like a true poet, not worth a sixpence.' It must suffice to set side by side the two views of Burns's business connection with Irvine.

Thus all obscure, unknown, and poor, thro' life I'm doom'd to wander,
Till down my weary bones I lay in everlasting slumber;
No view nor care, but shun whate'er might breed me pain or sorrow;
I live to-day as well 's I may, regardless of to-morrow.

But cheerful still, I am as well as a monarch in his palace,
Though Fortune's frown still hunts me down, with all her wonted malice:
I make indeed my daily bread, but ne'er can make it farther:
But as daily bread is all I need, I do not much regard her.

When sometimes by my labour I earn a little money,
Some unforeseen misfortune comes gen'rally upon me;
Mischance, mistake, or by neglect, or my good-natur'd folly:
But come what will, I 've sworn it still, I 'll ne'er be melancholy.

All you who follow wealth and power with unremitting ardour,
The more in this you look for bliss, you leave your view the farther:
Had you the wealth Potosi boasts, or nations to adore you,
A cheerful honest-hearted clown I will prefer before you.

It will be remembered that Burns engaged 'several of his Kirkoswald school-fellows to keep up a literary correspondence with him.' None of this correspondence has as yet seen the light. But the following letters to Thomas Orr, a young farmer, whose acquaintance, as has already been seen, he made at Kirkoswald, and who was in the habit of assisting William Burnes at harvest time, have been recovered. The first seems to have been written in September, and the second in November, 1782. Both are of interest, not only as indicating Burns's range of reading at this time, but as foreshadowing that gospel of human life to which he subsequently gave immortal expression in 'A Man 's a Man for a' That.'

TO THOMAS ORR.

DEAR SIR—I have been designed to write to you of a long time, but was at a loss for a direction, as I am ignorant what place of the country

you are in. I have nothing to tell you of news; for myself, I am going on in my old way, taking as light a burden as I can, of the cares of the world; studying men, their manners and their ways, as well as I can. Believe me, Tom, it is the only study in this world will yield solid satisfaction. To be rich and to be great are the grand concerns of this world's men, and to be sure, if moderately pursued, it is laudable, but where is it moderately pursued? The greater part of men grasp at riches as eagerly as if poverty were but another word for damnation and misery, whereas I affirm that the man whose only wish is to become great and rich, whatever he may appear to be, or whatever he may pretend to be; at the bottom he is but a miserable wretch. Avoid this sordid turn of mind if you would be happy. Observe mankind around you; endeavour, by studying the wisdom and prudence of some, and the folly and madness of others, to make yourself wiser and better. I hope you will write me soon, and tell me what your mind is employed in, what your studies principally are; and believe me that you may be wise and virtuous, generous and humane, is the sincere wish of your friend,

ROBT. BURNESS.

LOCHLEA, *September 7th* [1782].

TO THE SAME.

DEAR THOMAS—I am to blame for not returning you an answer sooner to your kind letter. But such has been the backwardness of our harvest, and so seldom are we at Ayr, that I have scarcely had one opportunity of sending a line to you. I was extremely delighted with your letter. I love to see a man who has a mind superior to the world and the world's men, a man who, conscious of his own integrity, and at peace with himself, despises the censures and opinions of the unthinking rabble of mankind. The distinction of a poor man and a rich man is something indeed, but it is nothing to the difference between either a wise man or a fool, or a man of honour and a knave.

> What is't to me, a Passenger, God wot,
> Whether my vessel be first-rate or not;
> The ship itself may make a better figure,
> But I who sail am neither less nor bigger.—POPE.

I have nothing further to say to you but go on and prosper, and if you miss happiness by enjoyment, you will find it by contented resignation. Write me soon, and let me know how you are to be disposed during the winter, and believe me to be ever your sincere friend,

ROBERT BURNS.*

LOCHLEA, *Nov. 17th*, 1782.

* These letters are also of interest as indicating that Burns was at this time hesitating as to the spelling of his name. He signs the second, which was first published by Mr J. A. Westwood Oliver, 'Robert Burns.' Dr Charles Rogers, who published the first in *facsimile* in his *Book of Burns*, says: 'In the MS. original, "Burness" has, by another hand, been converted into "Burns," the four last letters, "urns," having been written over in a heavier hand.'

Two months later we find him writing in a strain of militant self-respect to his old teacher, Murdoch:

TO MR JOHN MURDOCH, SCHOOLMASTER, STAPLES INN BUILDINGS, LONDON.

LOCHLEA, *15th January* 1783.

DEAR SIR—As I have an opportunity of sending you a letter without putting you to that expense which any production of mine would but ill repay, I embrace it with pleasure, to tell you that I have not forgotten, nor ever will forget, the many obligations I lie under to your kindness and friendship.

I do not doubt, sir, but you will wish to know what has been the result of all the pains of an indulgent father, and a masterly teacher, and I wish I could gratify your curiosity with such a recital as you would be pleased with; but that is what I am afraid will not be the case. I have, indeed, kept pretty clear of vicious habits, and in this respect I hope my conduct will not disgrace the education I have gotten; but as a man of the world, I am most miserably deficient. One would have thought that, bred as I have been under a father who has figured pretty well as *un homme des affaires*, I might have been what the world calls a pushing, active fellow; but to tell you the truth, sir, there is hardly anything more my reverse. I seem to be one sent into the world to see and observe; and I very easily compound with the knave who tricks me of my money, if there be anything original about him, which shows me human nature in a different light from anything I have seen before. In short, the joy of my heart is to 'study men, their manners, and their ways;' and for this darling subject I cheerfully sacrifice every other consideration. I am quite indolent about those great concerns that set the bustling, busy sons of care agog; and if I have to answer for the present hour, I am very easy with regard to anything further. Even the last, worst shift of the unfortunate and the wretched,* does not much terrify me: I know that even then my talent for what country folks call 'a sensible crack,'† when once it is sanctified by a hoary head, would procure me so much esteem, that even then I would learn to be happy. However, I am under no apprehensions about that, for though indolent, yet so far as my extremely delicate constitution permits, I am not lazy, and in many things, especially in tavern matters, I am a strict economist—not, indeed for the sake of the money, but one of the principal parts in my composition is a kind of pride of stomach; and I scorn to fear the face of any man living—above everything, I abhor as hell the idea of sneaking in a corner to avoid a dun—possibly some pitiful, sordid wretch, whom in my heart I despise and detest. 'Tis this, and this alone, that endears economy to me. In the matter of books, indeed, I am very profuse. My favourite authors are of the sentimental kind—such as Shenstone,

* Vagrant mendicancy. † A rational chat.

particularly his *Elegies;* Thomson; *Man of Feeling**—a book I prize next to the Bible; *Man of the World;* Sterne, especially his *Sentimental Journey;* Macpherson's *Ossian*, &c.; these are the glorious models after which I endeavour to form my conduct, and 'tis incongruous, 'tis absurd, to suppose that the man whose mind glows with sentiments lighted up at their sacred flame—the man whose heart distends with benevolence to the whole human race—he 'who can soar above this little scene of things'—can he descend to mind the paltry concerns about which the terræfilial race fret, and fume, and vex themselves? O how the glorious triumph swells my heart! I forget that I am a poor, insignificant devil, unnoticed and unknown, stalking up and down fairs and markets, when I happen to be in them, reading a page or two of mankind, and 'catching the manners living as they rise,' whilst the men of business jostle me on every side as an idle encumbrance in their way. But I daresay I have by this time tired your patience; so I shall conclude with begging you to give Mrs Murdoch—not my compliments, for that is a mere commonplace story, but my warmest, kindest wishes for her welfare—and accept of the same for yourself, from, dear sir, yours, R. B.

Burns had made the acquaintance of David Sillar, as we have seen, in the earlier part of 1781. Their friendship was of the most ardent kind. One can imagine the two young men taking their walks together, exchanging confidences about their sweethearts, or talking over the subjects set down for discussion at the next meeting of the Debating Society. Mrs Begg has given some details of a dancing party which took place on the July race-night in 1782, 'in honour of the society.' She related that Robert attended a dancing school when at Lochlea, and she believed it was some time after the Kirkoswald visit,† for a young cousin of theirs, Janet Brown [Broun], the daughter of the poet's entertainer there, was then residing with them, by way of completing the interchange of civilities. The father could not have objected very strongly to the dancing school, for Gilbert and the two eldest sisters, Agnes and Annabella, besides the ploughman, William Miller, likewise attended. On a practice-ball occurring, Burns paid Willie's expenses, that he might have Janet Brown as a partner, the poet's object being to have as his own partner some other lass who was then reigning in his affections. By-and-by the Tarbolton Club ball came on, a much more important affair; and, according

* Of this work he used to say that he had worn out two copies by carrying it in his pocket.—Anonymous 'Life of Burns,' *Scots Magazine*, 1797.

† Burns himself stated that he attended the dancing school when he was in his seventeenth year, and, of course, living at Mount Oliphant.

to the record of the society, it was most successful. An accident led to Mrs Begg being present. Then a girl of eleven, attending the sewing school at Tarbolton, she was going home to Lochlea, when her sister Annie met her, and took her back to be a partner to Matthew Patterson, a member of the club, who had somehow lost his sweetheart.

In emulation of Sillar, Burns began, so early as 1781, to practise the violin. When driven from the field by bad weather, he would while away an idle hour with his instrument. He never attained any proficiency either on it or on the German flute, which he subsequently attempted. It is curious, however, to note that he always retained the idea that he was a kind of musician; and, in a manuscript of his 'Epistle to Davie,' entitles him a brother fiddler, as well as brother poet. His musical accomplishments may be summed up by saying that he possessed a good ear, and much sensibility to sweet sounds, and could read music with tolerable readiness, as well as write down an air in notation. His voice, however, being essentially unmusical, he was never a successful singer.

The general life of Burns after his return from Irvine was as laborious as before. We have the authority of his brother Gilbert for the statement that it was frugal and temperate. Though eminently sociable, he was economical, and his personal expenses were not above seven pounds annually. We have scarcely any dates for compositions in the course of 1782; but it is certain that during this period he composed both poems and songs. One of the poems took its rise in a simple incident related by his brother Gilbert: 'He had, partly by way of frolic, bought a ewe and two lambs from a neighbour, and she was tethered in a field adjoining the house at Lochlea. He and I were going out with our teams, and our two younger brothers to drive for us, at mid-day, when Hugh Wilson, a curious-looking, awkward boy, clad in plaiding, came to us with much anxiety in his face, with the information that the ewe had entangled herself in the tether, and was lying in the ditch. Robert was much tickled with Hughoc's appearance and posture on the occasion. Poor Mailie was set to rights; and when we returned from the plough in the evening, he repeated to me her "Death and Dying Words" pretty much in the way they now stand.'

THE DEATH AND DYING WORDS OF POOR MAILIE, THE AUTHOR'S ONLY PET YOWE:

AN UNCO MOURNFU' TALE.

As Mailie an' her lambs thegither,
Were ae day nibblin on the tether,
Upon her cloot she coost a hitch, hoof—cast—loop
An' owre she warsl'd in the ditch: struggled
There groanin, dying, she did lie,
When Hughoc * he cam doytin by. walking stupidly

Wi' glowrin een, and lifted han's, staring
Poor Hughoc like a statue stan's;
He saw her days were near-hand ended,
But, waes my heart! he could na mend it!
He gapèd wide, but naething spak—
At length poor Mailie silence brak.

'O thou, whase lamentable face
Appears to mourn my woefu' case!
My dying words attentive hear,
An' bear them to my master dear.

'Tell him, if e'er again he keep
As muckle gear as buy a sheep— money
O, bid him never tie them mair
Wi' wicked strings o' hemp or hair!
But ca' them out to park or hill, drive
An' let them wander at their will:
So may his flock increase, an' grow
To scores o' lambs, and packs o' woo'!

'Tell him, he was a Master kin',
An' ay was guid to me an' mine;
An' now my dying charge I gie him—
My helpless lambs, I trust them wi' him.

* A neighbour herd-callan.—*B.* In another copy of the poem in the poet's handwriting, a more descriptive note is here given: 'Hughoc was an old, glowran, gapin' callan, about three-fourths as wise as other folk.'

'O, bid him save their harmless lives
Frae dogs, an' tods, an' butchers' knives! foxes
But gie them guid cow-milk their fill,
Till they be fit to fend themsel; provide for
An' tent them duly, e'en an' morn, care for
Wi' teats o' hay an' ripps o' corn. handfuls

'An' may they never learn the gaets ways
Of ither vile, wanrestfu' pets— restless
To slink thro' slaps, an' reave an' steal gaps in a fence—tear
At stacks o' pease, or stocks o' kail!
So may they, like their great forbears, ancestors
For monie a year come thro' the sheurs:
So wives will gie them bits o' bread,
An' bairns greet for them when they 're dead.

'My poor toop-lamb, my son an' heir, ram
O, bid him breed him up wi' care;
An' if he live to be a beast,
To pit some havins in his breast! good manners

'An' warn him—what I winna name,
To stay content wi' yowes at hame; ewes
An' no to rin an' wear his cloots,
Like ither menseless, graceless brutes. senseless

'An' neist, my yowie, silly thing, next.—little ewe
Gude keep thee frae a tether string!
O, may thou ne'er forgather up encounter
Wi' ony blastit, moorland toop;
But ay keep mind to moop an' mell, nibble - associate
Wi' sheep o' credit like thysel!

'And now, my bairns, wi' my last breath
I lea'e my blessin wi' you baith:
An' when you think upo' your mither,
Mind to be kind to ane anither.

'Now, honest Hughoc, dinna fail
To tell my master a' my tale;

An' bid him burn this cursèd tether,
An', for thy pains, thou'se get my blather.' bladder

This said, poor Mailie turn'd her head,
An' clos'd her een amang the dead!

POOR MAILIE'S ELEGY.*

Lament in rhyme, lament in prose,
Wi' saut tears tricklin down your nose;
Our bardie's † fate is at a close,
Past a' remead; remedy
The last sad cape-stane o' his woe 's
Poor Mailie's dead!

It 's no the loss o' warl's gear,
That could sae bitter draw the tear,
Or mak our bardie, dowie, wear borne down by grief
The mournin weed:
He 's lost a friend an' neebor dear,
In Mailie dead.

Thro' a' the town she trotted by him;
A lang half-mile she could descry him;
Wi' kindly bleat, when she did spy him,
She ran wi' speed:
A friend mair faithfu' ne'er cam nigh him,
Than Mailie dead.

I wat she was a sheep o' sense,
An' could behave hersel wi' mense: good manners
I 'll say 't, she never brak a fence,
Thro' thievish greed.
Our bardie, lanely, keeps the spence inner room
Sin' Mailie's dead.

* It has been pointed out by Mr J. Logie Robertson that Burns's model for this elegy is the 'Epitaph of Habbie Simpson, the Piper of Kilbarchan,' by Robert Sempill, who introduced the stanza in which it is written, and which was a favourite with Ramsay and Fergusson.

† Variation in this and other verses, 'Poor Robin's.'

Or, if he wanders up the howe, — valley
Her livin image in her yowe
Comes bleatin till him, owre the knowe, — knoll
For bits o' bread;
An' down the briny pearls rowe — roll
For Mailie dead.

She was nae get o' moorlan tips, — offspring—rams
Wi' tauted ket, an' hairy hips; — matted fleece
For her forbears were brought in ships — ancestors
Frae yont the Tweed:
A bonier fleesh ne'er cross'd the clips — fleece
Than Mailie's—dead.*

Wae worth that man wha first did shape
That vile, wanchancie thing—a raep! — ill-omened
It maks guid fellows girn an' gape, — make faces
Wi' chokin dread;
An' Robin's bonnet wave wi' crape
For Mailie dead.

O, a' ye bards on bonie Doon!
An' wha on Ayr your chanters tune!
Come, join the melancholious croon — dirge
O' Robin's reed!
His heart will never get aboon—
His Mailie's dead!

To the same period may be ascribed some of his songs—among them the following:

* When preparing the Elegy for the press, Burns substituted this verse for the following, which is interesting for its allusion to Fairlie, where his father had been gardener:

She was nae get o' runted rams,
Wi' woo like goats, and legs like trams:
She was the flower o' Fairlie lambs,
A famous breed;
Now Robin, greetin, chows the hams,
O' Mailie dead.

JOHN BARLEYCORN—A BALLAD.*

There was three kings into the east,
Three kings both great and high,
And they hae sworn a solemn oath
John Barleycorn should die.

They took a plough and plough'd him down,
Put clods upon his head,
And they hae sworn a solemn oath
John Barleycorn was dead.

But the cheerful Spring came kindly on,
And show'rs began to fall;
John Barleycorn got up again,
And sore surpris'd them all.

The sultry suns of Summer came,
And he grew thick and strong;
His head weel arm'd wi' pointed spears,
That no one should him wrong.

The sober Autumn enter'd mild,
When he grew wan and pale;
His bending joints and drooping head
Show'd he began to fail.

His colour sicken'd more and more,
He faded into age;
And then his enemies began
To show their deadly rage.

They 've taen a weapon, long and sharp,
And cut him by the knee;
Then ty'd him fast upon a cart,
Like a rogue for forgerie.

They laid him down upon his back,
And cudgell'd him full sore;

* This is an improvement upon an early song of probably English origin, of which Robert Jameson, in his *Ballads* (2 vols., 8vo, 1808), has given a copy which he obtained from a black-letter sheet in the Pepys Library, Cambridge.

They hung him up before the storm,
And turn'd him o'er and o'er.

They filled up a darksome pit
With water to the brim,
They heaved in John Barleycorn—
There let him sink or swim.

They laid him out upon the floor,
To work him further woe;
And still, as signs of life appear'd,
They toss'd him to and fro.

They wasted, o'er a scorching flame,
The marrow of his bones;
But a miller us'd him worst of all,
For he crush'd him 'tween two stones.

And they hae taen his very heart's blood,
And drank it round and round;
And still the more and more they drank,
Their joy did more abound.

John Barleycorn was a hero bold,
Of noble enterprise;
For if you do but taste his blood,
'Twill make your courage rise.

'Twill make a man forget his woe;
'Twill heighten all his joy:
'Twill make the widow's heart to sing,
Tho' the tear were in her eye.

Then let us toast John Barleycorn,
Each man a glass in hand;
And may his great posterity
Ne'er fail in old Scotland!

This period witnessed various love affairs of the poet, of which we have but an obscure account. One of these seems to be indicated in the beautiful song—

MARY MORISON.*

O, Mary, at thy window be,
It is the wish'd, the trysted hour!
Those smiles and glances let me see,
That make the miser's treasure poor:
How blythely wad I bide the stoure,
A weary slave frae sun to sun,
Could I the rich reward secure,
The lovely Mary Morison.

Yestreen, when to the trembling string
The dance gaed thro' the lighted ha',
To thee my fancy took its wing,
I sat, but neither heard nor saw:
Tho' this was fair, and that was braw,
And yon the toast of a' the town,
I sigh'd, and said amang them a',
'Ye are na Mary Morison.'

O Mary, canst thou wreck his peace,
Wha for thy sake wad gladly die?
Or canst thou break that heart of his,
Whase only faut is loving thee?
If love for love thou wilt na gie,
At least be pity to me shown;
A thought ungentle canna be
The thought o' Mary Morison.

A tombstone in Mauchline churchyard, which was erected in 1825, bears the following inscription: 'In memory of Adj. John Morrison, of the 104th Regiment, who died at Mauchline, 16th April 1804, in the 80th year of his age; also his daughter Mary—the poet's bonie Mary Morrison—who died 29th June 1791, aged 20; and his second spouse, Ann Tomlinson, who died 6th September 1831, aged 76.' If this record is correct, it follows that the composition of 'Mary Morison' must be referred to the Mauchline period of Burns's life, and there is a local tradition to the

* 'Of all the productions of Burns, the pathetic and serious love-songs which he has left behind him in the manner of old ballads are perhaps those which take the deepest and most lasting hold of the mind. Such are the lines to Mary Morison, &c.'—HAZLITT.

effect that Mary met the bard only once, and that at the tea-table of a friend. The late Rev. Dr Edgar, of Mauchline, also stated in his *Old Church Life in Scotland*: 'I am informed, on authority, that a member of the adjutant's family, who lived to be a grandmother, used to speak of Burns (with aversion, I may add) as one whom she knew personally when he lived at Mauchline, and that she believed her sister Mary was the "lovely Mary Morison" whom the poet admired. She often spoke of this long-lost Mary, who died in early youth, from the amputation of a foot that had been accidentally injured, as "one of the fairest creatures the sun ever shone upon."' The fact that if Burns met this Mary Morrison first in Mauchline, she could not, according to the dates on the tombstone, have been more than fifteen or sixteen years of age, while he was twelve years her senior, tells against the local tradition. The view of most biographers and editors of Burns is that the words 'Mary Morison' are but a euphonious rendering of 'Ellison Begbie,' and that the song of that name was inspired by his first serious passion. It may therefore have been written about the same time as 'The Lass of Cessnock Banks.' But its superiority as a work of art is a serious, if not a fatal objection to this theory. In any case, it is idle to dogmatise on the subject. Gilbert Burns maintained that the heroine of 'Mary Morison' inspired some lighter verses also. These, which Burns, when he sent them later in life to George Thomson, termed 'a juvenile production,' may now be given:

SONG—BONIE PEGGY ALISON.

TUNE—*The Braes o' Balquidder.*

Chor.—And I'll kiss thee yet, yet,
And I'll kiss thee o'er again;
And I'll kiss thee yet, yet,
My bonie Peggy Alison.

Ilk care and fear, when thou art near,
I ever mair defy them, O!
Young kings upon their hansel* throne
Are no sae blest as I am, O!
And I'll kiss thee yet, yet, &c.

* 'Hansel' means first fruit of an achievement or a season. 'Hansel throne' may be interpreted as 'Maiden throne.'

When in my arms, wi' a' thy charms,
I clasp my countless treasure, O!
I seek nae mair o' Heav'n to share
Than sic a moment's pleasure, O!
And I 'll kiss thee yet, yet, &c.

And by thy een sae bonie blue,
I swear I 'm thine for ever, O!
And on thy lips I seal my vow,
And break it shall I never, O!
And I 'll kiss thee yet, yet, &c.

Another of these affairs finds record in a still warmer strain:

THE RIGS O' BARLEY.

TUNE—*Corn Rigs.*

Chor.—Corn rigs, an' barley rigs,
An' corn rigs are bonie:
I 'll ne'er forget that happy night,
Amang the rigs wi' Annie.

It was upon a Lammas night,
When corn rigs are bonie,
Beneath the moon's unclouded light,
I held awa to Annie;
The time flew by, wi' tentless heed,*
Till 'tween the late and early,
Wi' sma' persuasion she agreed
To see me thro' the barley.

The sky was blue, the wind was still,
The moon was shining clearly;
I set her down, wi' right good will,
Amang the rigs o' barley:
I ken't her heart was a' my ain;
I lov'd her most sincerely;
I kiss'd her owre and owre again,
Amang the rigs o' barley.

* Many years ago, 'Caleb,' writing in the *Glasgow Citizen*, pointed out that 'tentless heed' is a contradiction in terms, 'tentless' being 'heedless;' and suggested 'tentless speed.' In the Kilmarnock edition, however, the words stand 'tentless head,' so that 'heed' (the spelling in the 1794 edition) might be a misprint for 'heid.' See page 251.

I lock'd her in my fond embrace;
Her heart was beating rarely:
My blessings on that happy place,
Amang the rigs o' barley!
But by the moon and stars so bright,
That shone that hour so clearly!
She ay shall bless that happy night
Amang the rigs o' barley.

I hae been blythe wi' comrades dear;
I hae been merry drinking;
I hae been joyfu' gath'rin gear;
I hae been happy thinking:
But a' the pleasures e'er I saw,
Tho' three times doubl'd fairly—
That happy night was worth them a',
Amang the rigs o' barley.

Anne Rankine—youngest daughter of John Rankine, who occupied the farm of Adamhill, adjoining Lochlea, and who was subsequently celebrated as 'rough, rude, ready-witted Rankine'—is said to have boasted that she was the Annie of 'The Rigs o' Barley.' It is added, that, on meeting Burns after the publication of the song, she told him that she had little expected to be celebrated by him in print; and that he replied: 'O ay, I was just wanting to give you a cast among the lave' [*rest*]. Anne, who is described as a tall and masculine-looking woman, married John Merry, an innkeeper in Cumnock, where she died in 1843. To the last, she would sing the song 'The Rigs o' Barley,' and speak affectionately of the memory of the poet.

There is a fourth 'juvenile' song, the history of which is a little obscure. It is alluded to by the poet himself as 'the ebullition of that passion which ended the school business' at Kirkoswald. It appears, however, from the style of composition, to have been produced some years after the visit to Kirkoswald, when the acquaintance with the fair *fillette* who had overset his trigonometry was temporarily renewed. The date of this revived passion may be set down as the summer and autumn of 1784, for Burns wrote a short letter in November of that year to his friend Thomas

Orr, in which he alluded to an affair of gallantry as embarrassing him, so that he was glad to have had 'Peggy' off his hand, this Peggy being, according to his sister, the same Margaret Thomson whom he had seen when a stripling at Kirkoswald.

SONG 'COMPOSED IN AUGUST.'

TUNE—*I had a Horse, I had nae mair.*

Now westlin winds and slaught'ring guns
  Bring Autumn's pleasant weather;
The moorcock springs on whirring wings,
  Amang the blooming heather:
Now waving grain, wide o'er the plain,
  Delights the weary farmer;
And the moon shines bright, when I rove at night,
  To muse upon my charmer.

The partridge loves the fruitful fells;
  The plover loves the mountains;
The woodcock haunts the lonely dells;
  The soaring hern the fountains: heron
Thro' lofty groves the cushat roves, wood-pigeon
  The path of man to shun it;
The hazel-bush o'erhangs the thrush,
  The spreading thorn the linnet.

Thus ev'ry kind their pleasure find,
  The savage and the tender;
Some social join, and leagues combine,
  Some solitary wander:
Avaunt, away, the cruel sway!
  Tyrannic man's dominion;
The sportsman's joy, the murd'ring cry,
  The flutt'ring, gory pinion!

But, Peggy dear, the ev'ning's clear,
  Thick flies the skimming swallow;
The sky is blue, the fields in view,
  All fading-green and yellow:

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Come let us stray our gladsome way,
And view the charms of Nature;
The rustling corn, the fruited thorn,
And ev'ry happy creature.

We 'll gently walk, and sweetly talk,
Till the silent moon shine clearly;
I 'll grasp thy waist, and, fondly prest,
Swear how I love thee dearly:
Not vernal show'rs to budding flow'rs,
Not Autumn to the farmer,
So dear can be as thou to me,
My fair, my lovely charmer!*

To this period, also, is generally ascribed the composition of one of the simplest and yet most artistic of his lyrics—

MY NANIE, O.

TUNE—*My Nanie, O.*

Behind yon hills where Stinchar flows,†
'Mang moors an' mosses many, O,
The wintry sun the day has clos'd,
And I 'll awa to Nanie, O.

The westlin wind blaws loud an' shill; shrill
The night 's baith mirk and rainy, O;
But I 'll get my plaid, an' out I 'll steal,
An' owre the hill to Nanie, O.

My Nanie 's charming, sweet, an' young;
Nae artfu' wiles to win ye, O:
May ill befa' the flattering tongue
That wad beguile my Nanie, O.

* Mrs Begg remembered, about the time of her brother's attachment to Jean Armour, seeing this song, freshly written out, amongst his papers, with the name 'Jeanie' instead of 'Peggy,' and the word 'Armour' instead of 'charmer,' at the end of the first and fifth verses. She therefore suspected that the poet had, through inadvertency, made a mistake in assigning this song to Margaret Thomson. Possibly he may have written the song for Peggy, and only temporarily dethroned her for the sake of a newer love.

† Burns subsequently sanctioned the substitution for the 'horribly prosaic' Stinchar, which has local verity in its favour, of the Lugar, a tributary of the Ayr, a name thought to be more euphonious, but which is otherwise unsuitable; yet 'Stinchar' appears in the edition of 1794.

Her face is fair, her heart is true;
As spotless as she 's bonie, O;
The op'ning gowan, wat wi' dew, daisy
Nae purer is than Nanie, O.

A country lad is my degree,
An' few there be that ken me, O;
But what care I how few they be?
I 'm welcome ay to Nanie, O.

My riches a' 's my penny-fee, wages
An' I maun guide it cannie, O;
But warl's gear ne'er troubles me, world's wealth
My thoughts are a'—my Nanie, O.

Our auld guidman delights to view
His sheep an' kye thrive bonie, O;
But I 'm as blythe that hauds his pleugh,
An' has nae care but Nanie, O.

Come weel, come woe, I care na by;
I 'll tak what Heav'n will sen' me, O:
Nae ither care in life have I,
But live, an' love my Nanie, O.

According to Mrs Begg, the poet's father lived long enough to see this song, and express hearty admiration of it. The heroine of the song, according to Gilbert Burns, 'was a farmer's daughter in Tarbolton parish, named Fleming, to whom the poet paid some of that roving attention which he was continually devoting to some one.' The Rev. Hamilton Paul published, in 1819, another popular Ayrshire legend about the point: 'In Kilmarnock, Burns first saw Nanie,* the subject of one of his most popular ballads. She captivated him as well by the charms of her person as by the melody of her voice. As he devoted much of his spare time to her society, and listened to her singing with the most religious attention, her sister observed to him that he paid more attention to Nanie's singing than he would do to a preaching. He retorted, with an oath, "Madam, there 's no comparison."'

* In a letter to Dr Robert Chambers, Mr Paul gives Agnes Sherriff as her name.

In April of 1783 the poet started a Common-place Book* with the following:

OBSERVATIONS, HINTS, SONGS, SCRAPS OF POETRY, &c., by ROBT. BURNESS; a man who had little art in making money, and still less in keeping it; but was, however, a man of some sense, a great deal of honesty, and unbounded good-will to every creature rational and irrational.—As he was but little indebted to scholastic education, and bred at a plough-tail, his performances must be strongly tinctured with his unpolished, rustic way of life; but as I believe they are really his own, it may be some entertainment to a curious observer of human-nature to see how a Ploughman thinks, and feels, under the pressure of Love, Ambition, Anxiety, Grief, with the like cares and passions, which, however diversified by the Modes and Manners of life, operate pretty much alike, I believe, in all the Species.

"There are numbers in the world, who do not want sense, to make a figure; "so much as an opinion of their own abilities, to put them upon recording their "observations, and allowing them the same importance which they do to those "which appear in print."—SHENSTONE.

"Pleasing when youth is long expir'd to trace
"The forms our pencil or our pen design'd!
"Such was our youthful air and shape and face!
"Such the soft image of our youthful mind."—*Ibidem.*

April 1783.

Notwithstanding all that has been said against Love respecting the folly & weakness it leads a young unexperienced mind into; still I think it, in a great measure, deserves the highest encomiums that have been passed upon it. If any thing on earth deserves the name of rapture or transport, it is the feelings of green eighteen in the company of the mistress of his heart when she repays him with an equal return of affection.

The next entry, bearing date August, contains his first recorded allusion to his literary performances:

There is certainly some connection between Love, and Music, & Poetry; and therefore, I have always thought it a fine touch of Nature, that passage in a modern love composition

* Burns included an abridgment of this, his first Common-place Book, in the volume of Letters which he transcribed in 1794 for Mr Robert Riddell of Glenriddel. Currie published this abridgment in 1800. Cromek, while collecting his *Reliques*, seems to have had access to the original; but, although he declared that 'these "Observations" are given entire from his [Burns's] manuscript,' he omitted portions of it, and interpolated, under date 1785, several pieces—the 'Egotisms from my own Sensations,' and four poems and songs from other manuscripts.

"As towards her cot he joggd along
"Her name was frequent in his song." *

For my own part I never had the least thought or inclination of turning Poet till I got once heartily in Love, and then Rhyme and Song were in a manner, the spontaneous language of my heart. The following composition was the first of my performances, and done at an early period of life, when my heart glowed with honest warm simplicity; unacquainted, and uncorrupted with the ways of a wicked world. The performance is, indeed, very puerile and silly: but I am always pleased with it, as it recals to my mind those happy days when my heart was yet honest and my tongue was sincere. The subject of it was a young girl who really deserved all the praises I have bestowed on her. I not only had this opinion of Her then—but I actually think so still, now that the spell is long since broken, and the inchantment at an end.

'O once I lov'd a bonie lass,' &c.†

CRITICISM ON THE FOREGOING SONG.

Lest my works should be thought below Criticism; or meet with a Critic who, perhaps, will not look on them with so candid and favorable an eye; I am determined to criticise them myself.

The first distic of the first stanza is quite too much in the flimsy strain of our ordinary street ballads; and on the other hand, the second distic is too much in the other extreme. The expression is a little akward, and the sentiment too serious. Stanza the second I am well pleased with; and I think it conveys a fine idea of that amiable part of the Sex —the agreables; or what in our Scotch dialect we call a sweet sonsy Lass. The third Stanza has a little of the flimsy turn in it; and the third line has rather too serious a cast. The fourth Stanza is a very indifferent one; the first line is, indeed all in the strain of the second Stanza, but the rest is mostly an expletive. The thoughts in the fifth Stanza come finely up to my favorite idea a sweet sonsy Lass: the last line however, halts a little. The same sentiments are kept up with equal spirit and tenderness in the sixth Stanza, but the second and fourth lines ending with short syllables hurts the whole. The seventh Stanza has several minute faults; but I remember I composed it in a wild enthusiasm of passion, and to this hour I never reccollect it, but my heart melts, and my blood sallies at the remembrance.

* 'The sun was sleeping in the main,
Bright Cynthia silvered all the plain,
When Colin turned his team to rest,
And sought the lass he loved the best.
As towards her cot he jogged along,
Her name was frequent in his song;
But when his errand Dolly knew,
She said she'd something else to do,' &c.
The Lark, 1765. Vol. i., p. 89.

† See p. 44—The song 'Handsome Nell.'

The entry that follows is interesting, as indicating the combat which was at the time going on between the austerely virtuous principles that he had acquired from his father, and the 'queer' views of life that had been opened up to him at Irvine:

September.

I intirely agree with that judicious Philosopher Mr Smith in his excellent Theory of Moral Sentiments, that Remorse is the most painful sentiment that can embitter the human bosom. Any ordinary pitch of fortitude may bear up tolerably well, under those calamities, in the procurement of which, we ourselves have had no hand; but when our own follies or crimes, have made us miserable & wretched, to bear it up with manly firmness, and at the same time have a proper penitential sense of our misconduct,—is a glorious effort of Self-command.

Of all the numerous ills that hurt our peace;
That press the soul, or wring the mind with anguish;
Beyond comparison the worst are those
By our own folly, or our guilt brought on.
In ev'ry other circumstance the mind
Has this to say, It was no deed of mine:
But, when to all the evil of misfortune
This sting is added, blame thy foolish self;
Or worser far, the pangs of keen remorse:
The tort'ring, gnawing consciousness of guilt—
Of guilt, perhaps, where we've involvèd others;
The young, the innocent, who fondly lov'd us:
Nay more, that very love their cause of ruin—
O! burning Hell in all thy store of torments
There's not a keener Lash—
Lives there a man so firm who, while his heart
Feels all the bitter horrors of his crime,
Can reason down it's agonizing throbs,
And, after proper purpose of amendment,
Can firmly force his jarring thoughts to peace.
O happy, happy, enviable man!
O glorious magnanimity of soul!

The next entries, dated March 1784, are in the same strain:

A penitential thought, in the hour of Remorse, Intended for a tragedy:

All villain as I am—a damnèd wretch, &c.*

* See p. 54.

I have often observed in the course of my experience of human life that every man even the worst, have something good about them, though very often nothing else than a happy temperment of constitution inclining them to this or that virtue; on this likewise, depend a great many, no man can say how many of our vices; for this reason no man can say in what degree any person besides himself can be, with strict justice called wicked.—Let any of the strictest character for regularity of conduct among us, examine impartially how many of his virtues are owing to constitution & education; how many vices he has never been guilty of, not from any care or vigilance, but from want of opportunity, or some accidental circumstance intervening; how many of the weakness's of mankind he has escaped because he was out of the line of such temptation; and, what often, if not always, weighs more than all the rest; how much he is indebted to the world's good opinion, because the world does not know all; I say any man who can thus think, will scan the failings, nay the faults & crimes of mankind around him, with a brother's eye.—

I have often coveted the acquaintance of that part of mankind commonly known by the ordinary phrase of BLACKGUARDS, sometimes farther than was consistent with the safety of my character; those who by thoughtless prodigality, or headstrong passions have been driven to ruin;—though disgraced by follies, nay sometimes "Stain'd with guilt and crimson'd o'er with crimes;" I have yet found among them, not a few instances, some of the noblest Virtues, Magnanimity, Generosity, disinterested friendship, and even Modesty in the highest perfection.

There was a certain period of my life that my spirit was broke by repeated losses & disasters, which threatened, and indeed effected the utter ruin of my fortune. My body, too, was attacked by that most dreadful distemper, a Hypochondria, or confirmed Melancholy: in this wretched state, the recollection of which makes me yet shudder, I hung my harp on the Willow trees, except in some lucid intervals, in one of which I composed the following—

O Thou Great Being! what Thou art,
Surpassest me to know; &c.*

The ensuing entries are near the same date:

April.

As I am, what the men of the world, if they knew of such a man, would call a whimsical Mortal; I have various sources of pleasure & enjoyment which are, in a manner, peculiar to myself; or some here & there such other out-of-the-way person.—Such is the peculiar pleasure I take in the season of Winter, more than the rest of the year.—This, I believe, may be partly owing to my misfortunes

* See p. 82—'A Prayer, under the pressure of violent anguish.'

giving my mind a melancholy cast; but there is something even in the—

> Mighty tempest & the hoary waste
> Abrupt & deep stretch'd o'er the buried earth—

which raises the mind to a serious sublimity, favorable to every thing great & noble.—There is scarcely any earthly object gives me more—I don't know if I should call it pleasure, but something which exalts me, something which enraptures me—than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood or high plantation, in a cloudy, winter day, and hear a stormy wind howling among the trees & raving o'er the plain. It is my best season for devotion; my mind is rapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to Him who, in the pompous language of Scripture, "Walks on the wings of the wind."—In one of these seasons, just after a tract of misfortunes I composed the following song:

> The wintry west extends his blast, &c.*

The following Song is a wild Rhapsody miserably deficient in Versification, but as the sentiments are the genuine feelings of my heart, for that reason I have a particular pleasure in conning it over:

> My father was a farmer upon the Carrick border, &c.†

Shenstone observes finely that love-verses writ without any real passion are the most nauseous of all conceits; and I have often thought that no man can be a proper critic of Love composition, except he himself, in one, or more instances, have been a warm votary of this passion. As I have been all along, a miserable dupe to Love, and have been led into a thousand weaknesses & follies by it, for that reason I put the more confidence in my critical skill in distinguishing FOPPERY & CONCEIT from real PASSION & NATURE.—Whether the following song will stand the test, I will not pretend to say, because it is MY OWN; only I can say it was, at the time, REAL:

> Behind yon hills where Stinchar flows, &c.‡

I think the whole species of young men may be naturally enough divided into two grand Classes, which I shall call the GRAVE, and the MERRY; tho' by the bye these terms do not with propriety enough express my ideas. There are indeed, some exceptions; some part of the species who, according to my ideas of these divisions, come under neither of them; such are those individuals whom Nature turns off her hand, oftentimes, very like BLOCKHEADS, but generally, on a nearer inspection, have somethings surprisingly clever about them. They are more properly men of Conceit than men of Genius; men whose heads are filled, and whose faculties are engrossed by some

* See p. 81—'Winter: a Dirge.'
† See p. 83.
‡ See p. 100—'My Nanie, O.'

whimsical notions in some art, or science; so that they cannot think, nor speak with pleasure, on any other subject.—Besides this pedantic species, Nature has always produced some mere, insipid blockheads, who may be said to live a vegetable life, in this world.

The GRAVE, I shall cast into the usual division of those who are goaded on; by the love of money; and those whose darling wish, is, to make a figure in the world.—The MERRY, are the men of Pleasure, of all denominations; the jovial lads who have too much fire & spirit to have any settled rule of action; but without much deliberation, follow the strong impulses of nature: the thoughtless; the careless; the indolent; and in particular, He, who, with a happy sweetness of natural temper, and a cheerful vacancy of thought, steals through life, generally indeed, in poverty & obscurity; but poverty & obscurity are only evils to him, who can sit gravely down, and make a repining comparison between his own situation and that of others; and lastly to grace the quorum, such are, generally, the men whose heads are capable of all the towering of Genius, and whose hearts are warmed with the delicacy of Feeling.

Early in 1783 the health of William Burnes completely gave way, to the great grief of his family. Robert is found in June writing on the subject to his cousin, James Burness, writer, Montrose, at the same time giving a matter-of-fact sketch of the state of Ayrshire at that period:

LOCHLEA, 21*st June* 1783.

DEAR SIR—My father received your favour of the 10th curt., and as he has been for some months very poorly in health, and is, in his own opinion—and indeed in almost everybody's else—in a dying condition, he has only with great difficulty wrote a few farewel lines to each of his brothers-in-law. For this melancholy reason, I now hold the pen for him to thank you for your kind letter, and to assure you, Sir, that it shall not be my fault if my father's correspondence in the north die with him. My brother writes to John Caird,* and to him I must refer you for the news of our family.

I shall only trouble you with a few particulars relative to the present wretched state of this country. Our markets are exceedingly high—oatmeal 17*d.* and 18*d.* per peck, and not to be got even at that price. We have indeed been pretty well supplied with quantities of white peas from England and elsewhere, but that resource is likely to fail us, and what will become of us then, particularly the very poorest sort, Heaven only knows. This country, till of late, was flourishing incredibly in the manufacture of Silk, Lawn, and Carpet-weaving; and we are still carrying on a good deal in that way, but much reduced from what it was. We had also a fine trade in the Shoe way, but now entirely

* John Caird, of Denside, Kincardineshire, who married Elspet, one of William Burnes's sisters.

ruined, and hundreds driven to a starving condition on account of it. Farming is also at a very low ebb with us. Our lands, generally speaking, are mountainous and barren; and our Landholders, full of ideas of farming gathered from English, and the Lothians, and other rich soils in Scotland, make no allowance for the odds of the quality of land, and consequently stretch us much beyond what, in the event, we will be found able to pay. We are also much at a loss for want of proper methods in our improvements of farming. Necessity compels us to leave our old schemes, and few of us have opportunities of being well informed in new ones. In short, my dear Sir, since the unfortunate beginning of this American war, and its as unfortunate conclusion, this country has been, and still is, decaying very fast. Even in higher life, a couple of our Ayrshire noblemen, and the major part of our knights and squires, are all insolvent. A miserable job of a Douglas, Heron, & Co.'s Bank, which no doubt you have heard of, has undone numbers of them; and imitating English and French, and other foreign luxuries and fopperies, has ruined as many more. There is a great trade of smuggling carried on along our coasts, which, however destructive to the interests of the kingdom at large, certainly enriches this corner of it, but too often at the expense of our morals. However, it enables individuals to make, at least for a time, a splendid appearance; but Fortune, as is usual with her when she is uncommonly lavish of her favours, is generally even with them at the last; and happy were it for numbers of them if she would leave them no worse than when she found them.

My mother sends you a small present of a cheese; 'tis but a very little one, as our last year's stock is sold off; but if you could fix on any correspondent in Edinburgh or Glasgow, we would send you a proper one in the season. Mrs Black * promises to take the cheese under her care so far, and then to send it to you by the Stirling carrier.

I shall conclude this long letter with assuring you that I shall be very happy to hear from you, or any of our friends in your country, when opportunity serves.

My father sends you, probably for the last time in this world, his warmest wishes for your welfare and happiness; and mother and the rest of the family desire to enclose their kind compts. to you, Mrs Burness, and the rest of your family, along with, dear Sir, Your affectionate Cousin, ROBT. BURNESS.

Mrs Begg's recollections of her father referred almost exclusively to his later years, when he had fallen into delicate health; but

* 'My mother's recollections of Betsy Black are quite fresh. She belonged to Kilmarnock, had gone to the neighbourhood of Montrose to act as housekeeper in some gentleman's family, and had got acquainted with Mrs Burness, who sent messages and letters by her when she returned to see her relations in Ayrshire. The Lochlea folk sent letters by her back again to the Burnesses in Montrose, and the cheese which Burns mentions in a letter to his cousin, my mother thinks, was also sent by her. But they lost all trace of her after going to Mossgiel.'—*From unpublished memorandum by Miss Isabella Begg.*

they were sufficiently distinct. The good old man seems to have inspired his children with a feeling akin to devotion. It was the natural effect of his infinite tenderness towards them, and of the benevolent feelings which animated the conduct of his whole life. Broken down as he was in constitution, he sustained his natural and habitual cheerfulness. He was always endeavouring to make his children happy by the promotion of innocent mirth; never letting slip, at the same time, any opportunity that occurred of awakening reflection, and fostering habits of self-culture. Mrs Begg saw him angry twice: in the first instance at a young lad for wasting some hay, when he had just returned weary and irritated from an interview about his unfortunate lawsuit; the second time, when an old man, to whom he had shown much kindness, told a falsehood about him. On the latter occasion an altercation took place in the kitchen, and Mrs Burnes gave her husband a reproachful look. He sternly said: 'There must be no gloomy looks here'—a solitary example of severity towards his wife which, on retrospect, gave much pain to all concerned. Mrs Burnes reported that he had never administered what might be called a beating to any of their children but once, when he punished his eldest girl for showing obstinacy while he was teaching her to read; and it had had a good effect upon the child's temper.

At Lochlea Mrs Begg's main occupation was one suited to her years—that of tending the cattle in the fields. Her father would often visit her, sit down by her side, and tell her the names of the various grasses and wild-flowers. When it thundered, she was sure he would soon come to her, because he knew that on such occasions she suffered much from terror.

William Burnes died on the 13th February 1784, leaving his family in the middle of a harassing lawsuit about the conditions of the lease of their farm. Mrs Begg remembered being at his bedside that morning, along with her brother Robert. Seeing her cry bitterly at the thought of parting, her father endeavoured to speak, but could only murmur a few words of comfort, such as might be suitable to a child, concluding with an injunction to her 'to walk in virtue's paths, and shun every vice.' After a pause, he said there was one of his family for whose future conduct he feared. He repeated the expression, and then Robert came up to the bed and asked: 'Oh, father, is it me

you mean?' The old man said it was. Robert turned to the window, with the tears streaming down his cheeks.

It was thought proper to carry the body to the scene of the good man's early married life, although the journey, being one of fully eight miles, involved inconvenience. The coffin was, according to an old fashion, slung between two bearing-horses, walking tandem, and thus, followed by relatives and neighbours on horseback, it was carried to Alloway Kirkyard. A small headstone over the grave there was inscribed with the following stanzas by his eldest son:

O ye whose cheek the tear of pity stains,
Draw near with pious rev'rence, and attend!
Here lie the loving husband's dear remains,
The tender father, and the gen'rous friend;
The pitying heart that felt for human woe,
The dauntless heart that fear'd no human pride;
The friend of man—to vice alone a foe;
For 'ev'n his failings lean'd to virtue's side.'*

The poet further expressed his feelings on this melancholy occasion in a letter to his cousin in Montrose:

LOCHLEA, 17*th February* 1784.

DR. COUSIN—I would have returned you my thanks for your kind favour of the 13th of December sooner, had it not been that I waited to give you an account of that melancholy event which for some time past we have from day to day expected.

On the 13th current I lost the best of fathers. Though, to be sure, we have had long warning of the impending stroke; still the feelings of nature claim their part, and I cannot recollect the tender endearments and parental lessons of the best of friends and the ablest of instructors, without feeling what, perhaps, the calmer dictates of reason would partly condemn.

I hope my father's friends in your country will not let their connection in this place die with him. For my part I shall ever with pleasure—with pride, acknowledge my connection with those who were allied by the ties of blood and friendship to a man whose memory I shall ever honor and revere.

I expect therefore, my dear Sir, you will not neglect any opportunity of letting me hear from you, which will very much oblidge, My dear Cousin, yours sincerely, ROBERT BURNESS.

* Goldsmith.

CHAPTER V.

MOSSGIEL, 1784–1786.

AS a refuge for the family in the event of the Lochlea landlord proceeding to extremities, Burns and his brother Gilbert had taken, at Martinmas 1783, another farm, only two or three miles distant from Lochlea, but in a different parish (Mauchline). This was MOSSGIEL, which was connected with so many of the most memorable facts in the poet's history. It consisted of 118 acres of cold, clayey soil, lying in a bare upland, little more than a mile from the town of Mauchline, on the road to Kilmarnock and Irvine. It was only by ranking as creditors of their father for the arrears of wages due on account of their past labours on Lochlea, that the two sons and two grown-up daughters of the late William Burnes rescued from the grip of the law a trifle of stock and 'plenishing' for the new farm. They made a fresh start in life with renewed resolutions to be unsparing of both labour and self-denial; and if circumstances had been at all favourable, they might have had little to complain of.

The poet says, in his autobiography:

'I entered on this farm with a full resolution "Come, go to, I will be wise!"* I read farming books; I calculated crops; I attended markets;

* The following letter (preserved in the Burns Monument Museum, Kilmarnock), written by the poet to his landlord, before he entered on the occupancy of Mossgiel, is of interest, as showing that he could transact ordinary business like ordinary folk. It is addressed, 'Mr Gavin Hamilton, Machline:'

'MACHLINE, *Octr.* 18, 1783.

'SIR—As you are pleased to give us the offer of a private bargain of your cows you intend for sale, my brother and I this day took a look of them, and a friend with us, on whose judgement we could something depend, to enable us to form an estimate. If you are still intending to let us have them in that way, please appoint a day that we may wait on you,

and in short, in spite of the devil, the world, and the flesh, I believe I should have been a wise man; but the first year, from unfortunately buying in bad seed; the second, from a late harvest, we lost half of both our crops. This overset all my wisdom, and I returned, "like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire."'

The last extract (p. 58) from the letter of Gilbert Burns as to his brother's life broke off with an affirmation of the sobriety of the poet's habits in his earlier years. He continues thus: 'A stronger proof of the general sobriety of his conduct need not be required, than what I am about to give. During the whole of the time we lived in the farm of Lochlea with my father, he allowed my brother and me such wages for our labour as he gave to other labourers, as a part of which, every article of our clothing manufactured in the family was regularly accounted for. When my father's affairs drew near a crisis, Robert and I took the farm of Mossgiel, consisting of 118 acres, at the rent of £90 per annum (the farm on which I live at present), from Mr Gavin Hamilton, as an asylum for the family in case of the worst. It was stocked by the property and individual savings of the whole family, and was a joint concern among us. Every member of the family was allowed ordinary wages for the labour he performed on the farm. My brother's allowance and mine was £7 per annum each. And during the whole time this family concern lasted, which was four years, as well as during the preceding period at Lochlea, his expenses never in any one year exceeded his slender income. As I was intrusted with the keeping of the family accounts, it is not possible that there can be any fallacy in this statement in my brother's favour. His temperance and frugality were everything that could be wished.'

The two brothers entered upon their farm of Mossgiel for the crop of 1784, taking up residence in March. The *steading* furnished a more comfortable residence for the family than they had ever before known, for it had been built to serve as a sort of country house for the family of Mr Gavin Hamilton,* writer in

and either agree amongst ourselves or else fix on men to whom we may refer it, tho' I hope we will not need any reference.—I am, Sir, your humble Servant, ROBERT BURNESS.

'*P.S.*—Whatever of your dairy utensils you intend to dispose of we will probably purchase. R. B.'

* Gavin Hamilton was born in Mauchline in November 1751. He was the fifth son of John Hamilton, writer, and 'clerk to the regalia' there, and owner of the lands of Kype in the parish of Avondale, Lanarkshire. The father, it may be worth while noting, figures in the

Mauchline, who, as first tenant from the proprietor, the Earl of Loudoun, had sublet the farm to the Burnses. We have the poet's word for it that he was now truly anxious to do well in the world. He says, as we have seen: 'I read farming books—I calculated crops—I attended markets.' 'Come, go to,' he cried, 'I will be *wise*.' 'Burns,' says Allan Cunningham, 'was attentive as far as ploughing, sowing, harrowing, reaping, thrashing, winnowing, and selling went: he did all this by a sort of mechanical impulse; but success in farming demands more. The farmer should know what is doing in his way in the world around; he must learn to anticipate demand; and, in short, to *time* everything. But he who pens an ode on his sheep, when he should be driving them forth to pasture —who sees visions on his way home from market, and makes rhymes on them—who writes an ode on the horse he is about to yoke, and a ballad on the girl who shows the brightest eyes among his reapers—has no chance of ever growing opulent, or of purchasing the field on which he toils.' Gilbert, who, in his brother's opinion, was much better suited for the ordinary work of the world than himself, took charge of everything. Robert, it is said, when addressed about a business matter, always turned it off with, 'Oh, talk to my brother about that.' But it does not appear that Gilbert, though an industrious and upright man, was a good farmer. A landlord, it must be admitted, is apt to unduly depreciate an unsuccessful tenant; but it is significant that Mr Alexander, subsequently proprietor of Mossgiel, used to speak of Gilbert as more a man of theory than of practical address and activity. It is not, therefore, surprising that this new speculation of the poet's proved no more fortunate than any of its predecessors. Dr Currie puts his finger on one at least of the causes of the failure. 'At the time,' he says, 'that our poet took the resolution of becoming *wise*, he procured a little book

Mauchline Parish Register, as he and 'Jacobina Young, daughter to the deceast John Young, merchant in Lanrick (Lanark), compeared before the Kirk-Session, produced certificates of their irregular marriage, owned their adherence, and were rebuked for their irregularity.' Gavin, after serving his apprenticeship as a writer in his father's office, started business on his own account, and in 1775 was appointed collector of the 'stent,' or assessment for the relief of the poor, the imposition of which by the heritors upon themselves followed the suppression of public mendicancy in 1771. Gavin Hamilton's quarrels with the kirk-session and his friendship with Burns are alluded to further on. He married Helen, elder daughter of Robert Kennedy of Daljarrock, in the parish of Colmonell, and died in 1805.

of blank paper, with the purpose, expressed on the first page, of making farming-memorandums. These farming-memorandums are curious enough, and a specimen may gratify the reader.' He then presents the following snatches of verse:*

EXTEMPORE.

O why the deuce should I repine,
And be an ill foreboder?
I'm twenty-three, and five feet nine,
I'll go and be a sodger!

I gat some gear wi' mickle care, wealth
I held it weel thegither;
But now it's gane, and something mair—
I'll go and be a sodger!

O leave novels, ye Machline belles,
Ye're safer at your spinning-wheel;
Such witching books are baited hooks
For rakish rooks like Rob Mossgiel;
Your fine *Tom Jones* and *Grandisons*,
They make your youthful fancies reel;
They heat your brains, and fire your veins,
And then you're prey for Rob Mossgiel.

Beware a tongue that's smoothly hung,
A heart that warmly seems to feel;
That feeling heart but acts a part—
'Tis rakish art in Rob Mossgiel.
The frank address, the soft caress,
Are worse than poisoned darts of steel;
The frank address, and politesse,
Are all finesse in Rob Mossgiel.

In the course of the summer of 1784, the health of the poet gave

* The date, April 1782, is prefixed by Currie to the extempore verses, but perhaps only under a presumption arising from the time of life indicated. Or it may be that Burns started his memorandum-book on his return to Lochlea from Irvine; 'I'm twenty-three,' and the allusion to his 'gear' being 'gane and something mair' fit in with that period. The advice to the Mauchline belles on the other hand seems to harmonise more with the period of the 'scandal' caused in the end of 1784 by the birth of Burns's illegitimate child.

way to a somewhat serious extent. The movements of his heart were affected, and he became liable to fainting fits, particularly in the night-time. As a remedy, he had recourse to cold baths. A barrel of water was placed near his bedside, and into this he was obliged to plunge when threatened by his ailment. It was probably at this time that he wrote what he calls in his Common-place Book 'a prayer, when fainting fits, & other alarming symptoms of a Pleurisy or some other dangerous disorder, which, indeed still threaten me, first put Nature on the alarm.' Some editors of Burns have associated the 'Prayer' and the 'Stanzas' with the Irvine period of his life, when he wrote 'A Prayer under the Pressure of Violent Anguish,' and when nature was 'first' put on the alarm by 'that most dreadful distemper, a hypochondria or confirmed melancholy.' Referring to that period, he says also in his letter to Moore, 'Rhyme, except some religious pieces which are in print, I had given up.' But Burns, though generally accurate, was never pedantic when dealing with the dates of his earlier poems, and the 'print' he alludes to in this passage may be that of the Edinburgh edition, which contained the first 'Prayer.' The later production is certainly pervaded with a profounder remorse than the earlier—a remorse which there is no good ground for believing he had any reason to feel when he was in Irvine. It was subsequently published under the simple designation of

A PRAYER IN THE PROSPECT OF DEATH.

O Thou unknown, Almighty Cause
Of all my hope and fear!
In whose dread presence, ere an hour,
Perhaps I must appear!

If I have wander'd in those paths
Of life I ought to shun—
As something, loudly, in my breast,
Remonstrates I have done—

Thou know'st that Thou hast formèd me
With passions wild and strong;
And list'ning to their witching voice
Has often led me wrong.

Where human weakness has come short,
Or frailty stept aside,
Do Thou, All-Good—for such Thou art—
In shades of darkness hide.

Where with intention I have err'd,
No other plea I have,
But, Thou art good; and Goodness still
Delighteth to forgive.

He wrote also:

STANZAS, ON THE SAME OCCASION.

Why am I loth to leave this earthly scene?
Have I so found it full of pleasing charms—
Some drops of joy with draughts of ill between—
Some gleams of sunshine 'mid renewing storms?
Is it departing pangs my soul alarms?
Or death's unlovely, dreary, dark abode?
For guilt, for guilt, my terrors are in arms:
I tremble to approach an angry God,
And justly smart beneath His sin-avenging rod.

Fain would I say, 'Forgive my foul offence!'
Fain promise never more to disobey;
But, should my Author health again dispense,
Again I might desert fair virtue's way;
Again in folly's path might go astray;
Again exalt the brute and sink the man;
Then how should I for heavenly mercy pray,
Who act so counter heavenly mercy's plan?
Who sin so oft have mourn'd, yet to temptation ran?

O Thou great Governor of all below!
If I may dare a lifted eye to Thee,
Thy nod can make the tempest cease to blow,
Or still the tumult of the raging sea:
With that controlling pow'r assist ev'n me,
Those headlong furious passions to confine,

For all unfit I feel my pow'rs to be,
To rule their torrent in th' allowèd line;
O, aid me with Thy help, Omnipotence Divine! *

To this period also may be assigned—though it is impossible to be precise upon this point—translations of two psalms, which appeared in the Edinburgh edition of the *Poems:*

PARAPHRASE OF THE FIRST PSALM.

The man, in life wherever plac'd,
Hath happiness in store,
Who walks not in the wicked's way,
Nor learns their guilty lore!

Nor from the seat of scornful pride
Casts forth his eyes abroad,
But with humility and awe
Still walks before his God.

That man shall flourish like the trees,
Which by the streamlets grow;
The fruitful top is spread on high,
And firm the root below.

But he whose blossom buds in guilt
Shall to the ground be cast,
And, like the rootless stubble, tost
Before the sweeping blast.

For why? that God the good adore,
Hath giv'n them peace and rest,
But hath decreed that wicked men
Shall ne'er be truly blest.

* Another MS. of this poem contains some variations expressive of deeper contrition than what here appears. After 'Again I might desert fair virtue's way,' comes 'Again by passions would be led astray.' The second line of the last stanza is, 'If one so black with crimes dare call on Thee.'

THE FIRST SIX VERSES OF THE NINETIETH PSALM VERSIFIED.

O Thou, the first, the greatest friend
Of all the human race!
Whose strong right hand has ever been
Their stay and dwelling place!

Before the mountains heav'd their heads
Beneath Thy forming hand,
Before this ponderous globe itself,
Arose at Thy command;

That Pow'r which rais'd and still upholds
This universal frame,
From countless, unbeginning time
Was ever still the same.

Those mighty periods of years
Which seem to us so vast,
Appear no more before Thy sight
Than yesterday that 's past.

Thou giv'st the word: Thy creature, man,
Is to existence brought;
Again Thou say'st, 'Ye sons of men,
Return ye into nought!'

Thou layest them, with all their cares,
In everlasting sleep;
As with a flood Thou tak'st them off
With overwhelming sweep.

They flourish like the morning flow'r,
In beauty's pride array'd;
But long ere night—cut down, it lies
All wither'd and decay'd.

We have now a series of poems dealing with a notable

incident in Burns's life—his first experience of ecclesiastical discipline as the result of a *liaison* with a servant-girl. They may be appropriately introduced by this letter, to which allusion has already been made:

TO MR THOMAS ORR,* PARK, NEAR KIRKOSWALD.

DR. THOMAS—I am much obliged to you for your last letter, tho' I assure you the contents of it gave me no manner of concern. I am presently so cursedly taken in with an affair of gallantry, that I am very glad Peggy is off my hand, as I am at present embarrassed enough without her. I don't choose to enter into particulars in writing, but never was a poor rakish rascal in a more pitiful taking. I should be glad to see you to tell you the affair, meanwhile I am, your friend,

ROBERT BURNESS.

MOSSGAVIL, 11*th Nov.* 1784.

There can be little question that this letter alludes to the fact that Elizabeth Paton, who had been a servant at Lochlea, had given birth—or was about to give birth—to a child of which he was the father. In a letter to Dr Chambers, Miss Isabella Begg records what her mother had told her about Elizabeth Paton: 'She was an exceedingly handsome figure, but very plain looking; so active, honest and independent a creature, that she had become a great favourite with her mistress, who, when her situation became known, was most anxious that Burns should have married her, but both my aunts and uncle Gilbert opposed it. The girl herself acknowledged he had broken no promise to her. They thought the faults of her character would soon have disgusted him. She was rude and uncultivated to a great degree; a strong masculine understanding, with a thorough (tho' unwomanly) contempt for every sort of refinement. . . . My mother says she does not believe that ever woman loved man with a more heartfelt devotion than that poor creature did him. She married, some time after, a farm-servant lad named Andrew, and made a most excellent wife. In fact, except in that one instance, her behaviour was exemplary. It is to her Burns alludes in "Tibbie:"

> There lives a lass in yonder park,
> I wadna gie her in her sark, &c.

Burns's affection for her had been very different from hers for

* As Thomas Orr now disappears from Burns's history, it may be mentioned here that he is understood to have gone to sea in 1785, and to have been drowned on his first voyage.

him; but he never treated her unkindly, and when he was about to marry Jean Armour, he offered to take the little girl. . . . When Burns went to Ellisland, the child Elizabeth Burns came to Mossgiel to my grandmother, and attended school at Mauchline till the poet's death. Her mother took her home, where she lived till she was married to John Bishop, who acted as land-steward to Baillie of Polkemmet. She was a good, upright creature, and when she died, the minister of the parish wrote a beautiful character of her to my grandfather.'*

Elizabeth Paton had, when the Burnes household at Lochlea was broken up, gone to reside at her own home, a village named Largieside. Near Largieside lived John Rankine, an acquaintance of Burns, who leased the farm of Adamhill, about two miles west of Lochlea, and whose daughter Annie, as has been seen, claimed to be the heroine of 'The Rigs o' Barley.' Rankine, who appears to have been about fifty years of age at this time, was a humorist of a rather rude type, and mingled a good deal in the society of the neighbouring gentry. Burns and he had taken to each other, no doubt in consequence of their community of feeling and thinking on many points. The youngest daughter of Rankine had a recollection of the poet's first visit to their house at Adamhill, and related that, coming into the parlour, he made a circuit, to avoid a small carpet in the centre, having probably at that time no acquaintance with carpets, or too great a veneration for them to tread upon them with his ploughman's shoes. Rankine amused the fancy of Burns by a trick which he played upon a 'sanctimonious professor' whom he invited to a jorum of toddy in his farm-house. 'The hot-water kettle had, by pre-arrangement, been primed with proof-whisky, so that the more water Rankine's guest added to his toddy for the purpose of diluting it, the more potent the liquor became.' A less unseemly specimen of his wit is given by Allan Cunningham.†

* Elizabeth Burns, when she reached the age of twenty-one, received £200 out of the public fund that was raised for the widow and children of her father. She was only thirty-two years of age when she died.

† 'Lord K——, it is said, was in the practice of calling all his familiar acquaintances *brutes*. "Well, ye brute, how are ye to-day?" was his usual mode of salutation. Once in company, his lordship, having indulged in his rudeness more than his wont, turned to Rankine and exclaimed: "Brute, are you dumb? Have ye no queer sly story to tell us?" "I have nae story," said Rankine, "but last night I had an odd dream." "Out with it by all means," said the other. "Well," said Rankine, "I dreamed I was dead, and that for keeping other than good company on earth, I was sent down-stairs. When I knocked at

Rankine appears to have heard of the 'misfortune' of Elizabeth Paton, and to have communicated the news to Burns. His letter produced the following

REPLY TO AN ANNOUNCEMENT BY J. RANKINE, THAT A GIRL IN HIS NEIGHBOURHOOD WAS WITH CHILD TO THE POET.

I am a keeper of the law
In some sma' points, altho' not a';
Some people tell me gin I fa', if
Ae way or ither,
The breaking of ae point, tho' sma',
Breaks a' thegether.*

I hae been in for 't ance or twice,
And winna say o'er far for thrice;
Yet never met wi' that surprise
That broke my rest;
But now a rumour 's like to rise—
A whaup 's i' the nest! curlew

About this time, also, Burns sent his friend a few of his poems, with an epistle in which he alluded, still in the Rabelaisian vein, to the Largieside episode:

EPISTLE TO JOHN RANKINE.

O rough, rude, ready-witted Rankine,
The wale o' cocks for fun an' drinking! choice
There 's mony godly folks are thinking
Your dreams and tricks
Will send you Korah-like a-sinkin,
Straught to auld Nick's.

the low door, wha should open it but the deil; he was in a rough humour, and said: 'Wha may ye be, and what 's your name?' 'My name,' quoth I, 'is John Rankine, and my dwelling-place was Adamhill.' 'Gae wa' wi' ye,' quoth Satan, 'ye canna be here; ye 're ane o' Lord K——'s brutes—hell 's fou o' them already.'" This sharp rebuke, it is said, polished for the future his lordship's speech.'—*Cunningham's edition of Burns.*

* 'For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all.'—*James*, ii. 10.

Ye hae sae mony cracks an' cants, jokes in conversation—tricks
And in your wicked, drucken rants, frolics
Ye mak a devil o' the saunts, saints
An' fill them fou; drunk
And then their failings, flaws, an' wants,
Are a' seen thro'.

Hypocrisy, in mercy spare it!
That holy robe, O dinna tear it!
Spare 't for their sakes, wha aften wear it—
The lads in black;
But your curst wit, when it comes near it,
Rives 't aff their back. Tears

Think, wicked Sinner, wha ye 're skaithing: harming
It 's just the 'Blue-gown' badge an' claithing*
O' saunts; tak that, ye lea'e them naithing
To ken them by,
Frae ony unregenerate heathen
Like you or I.

I 've sent you here some rhymin ware,
A' that I bargain'd for, an' mair;
Sae, when ye hae an hour to spare,
I will expect,
Yon sang† ye 'll sen 't, wi' cannie care, anxious
And no neglect.

Tho' faith, sma' heart hae I to sing!
My muse dow scarcely spread her wing; can
I 've play'd mysel a bonie spring,
An' danc'd my fill!
I 'd better gaen an' sair't the king served
At Bunker's Hill.

* Alluding to a blue uniform and badge worn by a select number of privileged beggars in Scotland, usually called King's Bedesmen. Edie Ochiltree, in *The Antiquary*, is an example of the corps. See note, p. 145.

† A song he had promised the author.—*B.*

'Twas ae night lately, in my fun,
I gaed a rovin wi' the gun,
An' brought a paitrick to the grun'— partridge
A bonie hen;
And, as the twilight was begun,
Thought nane wad ken.

The poor, wee thing was little hurt;
I straiket it a wee for sport,
Ne'er thinkin they wad fash me for 't; trouble
But, Deil-ma-care!
Somebody tells the poacher-court,
The hale affair.

Some auld, us'd hands had taen a note,
That sic a hen had got a shot;
I was suspected for the plot;
I scorn'd to lie;
So gat the whissle o' my groat,
An' pay 't the fee.

But, by my gun, o' guns the wale, choice
An' by my pouther an' my hail,
An' by my hen, an' by her tail,
I vow an' swear!
The game shall pay, owre moor an' dale,
For this, niest year.

As soon 's the clockin-time is by,
An' the wee pouts begun to cry,
L—d, I 'se hae sportin by an' by,
For my gowd guinea;
Tho' I should herd the buckskin * kye
For 't, in Virginia!

* 'Buckskin' was the nickname given by the Royalists to the American troops in the War of Independence. It has been suggested that 'buckskin kye' really means negroes, and this view finds some support in the fact that he subsequently contemplated the possibility of his being 'a poor negro-driver' (see p. 20).

Trowth, they had muckle for to blame! — in truth
'Twas neither broken wing nor limb,
But twa-three draps about the wame,
Scarce thro' the feathers;
An' baith a 'yellow George' to claim — guinea
An' thole their blethers! — stand their abuse

It pits me ay as mad 's a hare;
So I can rhyme nor write nae mair;
But pennyworths again is fair,
When time 's expedient:
Meanwhile I am, respected Sir,
Your most obedient.

When the child was born, Burns addressed to it a 'Welcome,' the tenderness of which is as remarkable as the humour of the 'Epistle:'

A POET'S WELCOME TO HIS LOVE-BEGOTTEN DAUGHTER.*

THE FIRST INSTANCE THAT ENTITLED HIM TO THE VENERABLE APPELLATION OF FATHER.

Thou 's welcome, wean; mishanter fa' me, — child—mishap
If thoughts o' thee, or yet thy mamie,
Shall ever daunton me or awe me, — discourage
My bonie lady,
Or if I blush when thou shalt ca' me
Tyta or daddie.

Tho' now they ca' me fornicator,
An' tease my name in kintry clatter, — talk throughout the district
The mair they talk, I 'm kent the better,
E'en let them clash; — gossip
An auld wife's tongue 's a feckless matter — trifling
To gie ane fash. — annoyance

* Burns wrote several versions of this poem, which was first published about the end of last century. In transcribing it in the Glenriddel volume, to which allusion has already been made, he omitted the stanza which now stands seventh.

Welcome! my bonie, sweet, wee dochter,
Tho' ye come here a wee unsought for,
And tho' your comin' I hae fought for,
Baith kirk and queir;
Yet, by my faith, ye 're no unwrought for
That I shall swear!

Wee image o' my bonie Betty,
As fatherly I kiss and daut thee, fondle
As dear, and near my heart I set thee,
Wi' as guid will
As a' the priests had seen me get thee
That 's out o' h—ll.

Sweet fruit o' mony a merry dint,
My funny toil is no' a' tint, lost
Sin' thou cam to the warl' asklent, irregularly
Which fools may scoff at;
In my last plack thy part's be in 't the smallest of coins
The better ha'f o' 't. half of it

Tho' I should be the waur bestead,
Thou 's be as braw and bienly clad, warmly
And thy young years as nicely bred
Wi' education,
As ony brat o' wedlock's bed, child
In a' thy station.

Lord grant that thou may ay inherit
Thy mither's person, grace, an' merit,*
An' thy poor, worthless daddie's spirit,
Without his failins,
'Twill please me mair to see thee heir it, †
Than stocket mailens. farms

For if thou be what I wad hae thee,
And tak the counsel I shall gie thee,

* Variation—'Mother's look and graceful merit.'
† Variation—'Hear and see it.'

I 'll never rue my trouble wi' thee—*
The cost nor shame o' 't,
But be a loving father to thee,
And brag the name o' 't.

We now return to the Common-place Book :

August.

The foregoing was to have been an elaborate dissertation on the various species of men ; but as I cannot please myself in the arrangement of my ideas on the subject, I must wait till farther experience, & nicer observations throw more light on the subject.—In the mean time I shall set down the following fragment which, as it is the genuine language of my heart, will enable any body to determine which of the Classes I belong to :

GREEN GROW THE RASHES.†

TUNE—*Green grow the Rashes.*

There's nought but care on ev'ry han',
In every hour that passes, O :
What signifies the life o' man,
An' 'twere na for the lasses, O ?

Chor.—Green grow the rashes, O ; rushes
Green grow the rashes, O ;
The sweetest hours that e'er I spend,
Are spent among the lasses, O.

The war'ly race may riches chase, worldly
An' riches still may fly them, O ;
An' tho' at last they catch them fast,
Their hearts can ne'er enjoy them, O.

But gie me a cannie hour at e'en, happy
My arms about my dearie, O ;
An' war'ly cares, an' war'ly men,
May a' gae tapsalteerie, O ! topsy-turvy

* Variation—' A lovin father I 'll be to thee,
If thou be spared ;
Thro' a' thy childish years I 'll e'e thee,
And think 't weel-wared.'

† This poem may have been composed at Lochlea. The last verse did not appear in the early manuscript copies.

For you sae douce, ye sneer at this; grave
Ye 're nought but senseless asses, O:
The wisest man the warl' e'er saw,
He dearly lov'd the lasses, O.

Auld Nature swears, the lovely dears
Her noblest work she classes, O:
Her prentice han' she try'd on man,
An' then she made the lasses, O.*

As the grand end of human life is to cultivate an intercourse with that BEING, to whom we owe life, with ev'ry enjoyment that renders life delightful; and to maintain an integritive conduct towards our fellow creatures; that so by forming PIETY & VIRTUE into habit, we may be fit members for that society of the Pious, and the Good, which reason and revelation teach us to expect beyond the grave—I do not see, that the turn of mind, and pursuits of such a one as the above verses describe—one who spends the hours & thoughts which the vocations of the day can spare with Ossian, Shakespeare, Thomson, Shenstone, Sterne &c. or as the maggot takes him, a gun, a fiddle, or a Song to make, or mend; and at all times some hearts-dear bony lass in view—I say I do not see that the turn of mind & pursuits of such a one are in the least more inimical to the sacred interests of Piety & Virtue, than the, even lawful, bustling, & straining after the world's riches & honors: and I do not see but he may gain Heaven as well —which by the bye, is no mean consideration, who steals thro' the Vale of Life, amusing himself with every little flower that fortune throws in his way; as he, who, straining strait forward, perhaps spattering all about him, gains some of Life's little eminences, where, after all, he can only see & be seen a little more conspicuously, than, what in the pride of his heart, he is apt to term, the poor, indolent, devil he has left behind him.

* In this song Burns made an improvement upon an old ditty that was sung to the same air. It has been pointed out that the last admirable verse is formed upon a conceit, which was in print long before the days of Burns, in a comedy entitled *Cupid's Whirligig*, published in 1607. The passage in the comedy is an apostrophe to the female sex, as follows:

'Oh woman ——
—— since we
Were made before ye, should we not love and
Admire ye as the last, and therefore perfect'st work
Of Nature? Man was made when Nature was
But an apprentice, but woman when she
Was a skilful mistress of her art.'

It might be presumed that Burns had no chance of seeing this old play; but it appears that the passage was transcribed in a book which was not very scarce in his time—namely, *The British Muse: a Collection of Thoughts*, by Thomas Hayward, Gent. 4 vols. London, 1738.

This is evidently an attempt to reconcile himself to the choice, which powerful impulse was forcing upon him, of the lyre instead of the plough.

August.

A prayer, when fainting fits, & other alarming symptoms of a pleurisy or some other dangerous disorder, which indeed still threaten me, first put Nature on the alarm:

O Thou unknown, Almighty Cause
Of all my hope and fear! &c.*

Misgivings in the hour of DESPONDENCY and—prospect of DEATH.

Why am I loth to leave this earthly scene? &c.†

September.

SONG.

Yestreen I met you on the moor, &c.‡

John Barleycorn—A Song, to its own Tune.

I once heard the old song, that goes by this name, sung; & being very fond of it, & remembering only two or three verses of it, viz. the 1st, 2d, and 3d, with some scraps which I have interwoven here & there in the following piece:

June 1785.

There was three kings into the east, &c.§

The death & dyin' words o' poor Malie—my ain pet ewe—an unco mournfu' Tale.

As Mailie, an' her lambs thegither, &c.‖

A letter sent to John Lapraik, near Muirkirk, a true, genuine, Scotish Bard.

April 1st, 1785.

While briers an' woodbines budding green, &c.¶

On receiving an answer to the above I wrote the following:

April 21st, 1785.

While new-ca'd kye rowte at the stake, &c.**

August.

A SONG.

When chill November's surly blast, &c.††

Some years before leaving Lochlea Burns had joined a fraternity of Freemasons who met in a small public-house in the village of

* See p. 115—'A Prayer in the Prospect of Death.'
† See p. 116—'Stanzas.
‡ See p. 52—'O Tibbie, I hae seen the day.'
§ See p. 93.
‖ See p. 89.
¶ See p. 157.
** See p. 163.
†† See p. 218—'Man was made to mourn.'

Tarbolton.* His sociable nature inclined him to take a warm part in their festivities; and his wit and intelligence enabled him to rise speedily to a leading place in the lodge.† His name occurs in the books of St James's Tarbolton Lodge (178) as Depute-master, July 27, 1784, and in this capacity he signs minutes for two or three years thereafter. According to the report of old associates at the village, he was 'so keen a mason, that he would hold lodges for the admission of new members in his own house,' and when removed to Mossgiel, four miles distant, he continued to attend meetings at Tarbolton regularly. His enthusiasm for freemasonry must have sprung from his sociable disposition alone, for Burns was not a convivialist for the sake of gross indulgence. The bacchanalianism of his verse did not come from the heart, as his amatory frenzy usually did. It was merely the literary expression of a recognised common sentiment. That may unquestionably be affirmed of a piece referable to the Tarbolton festivities:

SONG—NO CHURCHMAN AM I.‡

TUNE—*Prepare, my dear Brethren, to the Tavern let's fly.*

No churchman am I for to rail and to write,
No statesman nor soldier to plot or to fight,
No sly man of business contriving a snare,
For a big-belly'd bottle 's the whole of my care.

The peer I don't envy, I give him his bow;
I scorn not the peasant, tho' ever so low;
But a club of good fellows, like those that are here,
And a bottle like this, are my glory and care.

Here passes the squire on his brother—his horse;
There centum per centum, the cit with his purse;
But see you the *Crown* how it waves in the air?
There a big-belly'd bottle still eases my care.

* Burns was *made* a mason by Alexander Wood, tailor in Tarbolton. The first mason he himself made was Matthew Hall, a noted musician, long after resident in Newton-upon-Ayr.—*Ballads and Songs of Ayrshire.*

† See Appendix, No. III.

‡ It has been conjectured that this song was written by Burns in Irvine. This is possible; as he was admitted an apprentice mason in July 1781. But the date of its composition is immaterial.

The wife of my bosom, alas! she did die;
For sweet consolation to church I did fly;
I found that old Solomon provèd it fair,
That a big-belly'd bottle 's a cure for all care.

I once was persuaded a venture to make;
A letter inform'd me that all was to wreck;
But the pursy old landlord just waddl'd up stairs,
With a glorious bottle that ended my cares.

'Life's cares they are comforts'*—a maxim laid down
By the Bard, what d' ye call him? that wore the black gown;
And faith I agree with th' old prig to a hair;
For a big-belly'd bottle 's a heav'n of a care.†

A STANZA ADDED IN A MASON LODGE.

Then fill up a bumper and make it o'erflow,
And honours masonic prepare for to throw;
May every true Brother of the Compass and Square
Have a big-belly'd bottle when harass'd with care.

This is little more than an exercise in verse-making, on the model of some of the Anacreontics to be found in the song-books of the last century. A song somewhat like it occurs in the *Charmer* (1751), in which the poet excuses himself for the desertion of his Chloe by chanting the superior charms of wine; one verse runs:

She, too, might have poisoned the joy of my life,
With nurses and babies, and squalling and strife;
But my wine neither nurses nor babies can bring,
And a big-bellied bottle 's a mighty good thing.

TO MR JAMES BURNESS, MONTROSE.

Mossgiel, 3*d August* 1784.

My Dear Sir—I ought in gratitude to have acknowledged the receipt of your last kind letter before this time; but, without troubling

* Young's *Night Thoughts*.

† It has been suggested that 'heav'n' is a misprint for 'hav'n,' and that the bottle should be regarded as a port to flee to when troubled. On the other hand, 'heav'n' may be interpreted like 'glory and care,' as a 'dear affliction.'

you with any apology, I shall proceed to inform you that our family are all in good health at present, and we were very happy with the unexpected favour of John Caird's company for nearly two weeks, and I must say it of him that he is one of the most agreeable, facetious, warm-hearted lads I was ever acquainted with.

We have been surprised with one of the most extraordinary phenomena in the moral world, which, I dare say, has happened in the course of this last century. We have had a party of the 'Presbytery Relief,' as they call themselves, for some time in this country. A pretty thriving society of them has been in the burgh of Irvine for some years past, till about two years ago, a Mrs Buchan from Glasgow came and began to spread some fanatical notions of religion among them, and in a short time made many converts among them, and among others, their Preacher, one Mr Whyte, who, upon that account, has been suspended and formally deposed by his brethren. He continued, however, to preach in private to his party, and was supported, both he and their Spiritual Mother, as they affect to call old Buchan, by the contributions of the rest, several of whom were in good circumstances; till in Spring last, the populace rose and mobbed the old leader, Buchan, and put her out of the town; on which all her followers voluntarily quitted the place likewise, and with such precipitation, that many of them never shut their doors behind them; one left a washing on the green, another a cow bellowing at the crib without meat, or any body to mind her; and after several stages, they are fixed at present in the neighbourhood of Dumfries. Their tenets are a strange jumble of enthusiastic jargon; among others, she pretends to give them the Holy Ghost by breathing on them, which she does with postures and practices that are scandalously indecent. They have likewise disposed of all their effects, and hold a community of goods, and live nearly an idle life, carrying on a great farce of pretended devotion in barns and woods, where they lodge and lie all together, and hold likewise a community of women, as it is another of their tenets that they can commit no moral sin. I am personally acquainted with most of them, and I can assure you the above mentioned are facts.

This, my dear Sir, is one of the many instances of the folly in leaving the guidance of sound reason and common sense in matters of religion. Whenever we neglect or despise these sacred monitors, the whimsical notions of a perturbated brain are taken for the immediate influences of the Deity, and the wildest fanaticism, and the most inconsistent absurdities, will meet with abettors and converts. Nay, I have often thought, that the more out-of-the-way and ridiculous their fancies are, if once they are sanctified under the sacred name of Religion, the unhappy mistaken votaries are the more firmly glued to them.

I expect to hear from you soon, and I beg you will remember me to all friends, and believe me to be, my Dear Sir, your affectionate Cousin,

ROBERT BURNESS.

Direct to me at Mossgiel, parish of Mauchline, near Kilmarnock.

Burns's allusion to the extraordinary sect known as 'the Buchanites' requires explanation.* Mrs Elspat Buchan, according to Joseph Train's *History of the Buchanites from First to Last*, was 'the daughter of John Simpson and Margaret Gordon, who kept a small wayside public-house on the old road between Banff and Portsoy, at a place called Fatmacken, where she was born about 1738.' She seems to have contracted at Ayr a regular or irregular marriage with Robert Buchan, a working potter. He removed to Banff and subsequently to Glasgow, where in 1781 he was joined by his wife, who had failed in an endeavour to support herself and three children by teaching a sewing-school in Banff. He belonged to the 'Relief' body of Presbyterians, and this circumstance led to Mrs Buchan's association with the Rev. Hugh White (or Whyte) mentioned in Burns's letter. White had become minister of the 'Relief' congregation at Irvine in 1782, and 'being called to assist at a sacrament in the neighbourhood of Glasgow in December 1782, she attended on that occasion, and being captivated with his oratory, she communicated the flattering account by letter of his being the first minister who had spoken effectually to her heart.' He shortly after invited her to Irvine. There she was welcomed by White's congregation, and in the course of meetings she had with them, she 'gave herself out to be the Third Person in the Godhead, and pretended to confer immortality on whomsoever she breathed; and promised eventually to translate direct to heaven in a body, without their tasting death, all who put unlimited faith in her divine mission. She also personified the Woman described in the Revelation of St John as being 'clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet'; and pretended to have brought forth the Man-child who 'was to rule all nations with a rod of iron,' in the person of Mr White.

'Luckie' Buchan, as she was familiarly styled, gained a complete ascendancy over the minds of Mr White, his wife, and a

* John Galt, the novelist, who was born in Irvine in 1779, and must therefore have been four years of age when the Buchanites left the town 'singing psalms as they went, shouting and saying they were going to the New Jerusalem,' relates in his autobiography: 'I with many other children also accompanied her, but my mother in a state of distraction pursued, and drew me back by the lug and the horn. I have not the slightest recollection of Mrs Buchan's heresies—how could I?—but the scene, and more than once the enthusiasm of the psalm-singing, has risen in my remembrance, especially in describing the Covenanters in *Ringan Gilhaise*.'

considerable number of the persons who attended the meetings she held every night. A charge of heresy was, however, brought against Mr White, and in August of 1783 he was deposed by his Presbytery. The people of Irvine generally were strongly opposed to Mrs Buchan, quite as much on account of the postures, practices, and views on marriage to which Burns alludes in his letter to his cousin, as by reason of her extravagant religious pretensions. The poet does not appear to have merely repeated gossip when he spoke of 'community of women' and immunity from moral sin as portions of the Buchanite creed. In the 'Divine Dictionary' of the sect, published by Mr White, it is laid down that 'the same two that finished the carnal service at the altar and bestial sacrifices put an end to carnal sacrifices. It is devilish to think that merely refraining from women and certain meats constitutes salvation. Where the Holy Spirit of God occupies all the person and religions and reigns throughout the flesh, it matters not much whether they marry or not.' One of the most fanatical members of the sect has also recorded that 'the most legal union marriage could afford, became null and void in the society, such being at variance with the rules; it being absolutely necessary for those who had wives to live as those who had none.'

It is not very surprising, therefore, that the rabble of Irvine should have mobbed and very nearly killed Mrs Buchan, and that about the middle of 1784 the magistrates, who had been implored to take proceedings against her as a blasphemer, should have formally expelled her from the town. She and her supporters, numbering forty-six in all, and including Mr White, left Irvine, and proceeded by way of Kilmarnock, Mauchline, and Cumnock, to New Cample, a farm about two miles from Thornhill in Dumfriesshire, where they encamped. The society obtained some recruits both from the neighbourhood and from England, but it had shown symptoms of decline even before Mrs Buchan falsified her prophecies by dying a natural death in 1791. This event led to the break-up of the sect. A few of its members remained on the farm of Auchengibbert, in Galloway, which they had leased after leaving New Cample. Others emigrated to the United States in 1792 with Mr White, who gave up his belief in Mrs Buchan's mission, and appears to have become a teacher at a village in Virginia, where he 'preached occasionally to a few Universalists, but

never mentioned any of his former whimsical doctrines.' The last of the Buchanites died in 1848.

Burns states in his letter to his cousin, that, when he was in Irvine engaged in flax-dressing, he was intimately acquainted with several persons who afterwards became zealous Buchanites. Among these was, in all probability, Peter Hunter, who left Irvine in the company of Mrs Buchan in 1784, and who lived with his family in the Glasgow Vennel, where Burns lodged. Hunter is described by Train as town-clerk of Irvine. This appears to be a mistake. He was procurator-fiscal (public prosecutor) of the burgh, and had also a proprietary interest in some vessels trading to and from the port of Irvine. According to Mrs Begg, Burns was for a time attached to Jean Gardner, another member of the sect, daughter of a butcher in Irvine, in whose house Mr White is believed to have lodged. Train goes so far as to affirm his belief that the 'darling Jean' referred to in his 'Epistle to Davie,' is Jean Gardner. He also states that Burns frequently visited her, both at New Cample and at Auchengibbert,* and quotes this evidence of Andrew Innes, one of the most fanatical of the sect: 'When I was sent back from Thornhill for Mr Hunter, Jean Gardner came with me from Irvine to Closeburn, and when we were in the neighbourhood of Tarbolton, she seemed to be in fear, and rather in a discomposed condition; when I inquired the cause, she said, it was lest Burns the poet should see her, for if he did he would be sure to interrupt her, for they had been on terms of intimacy, but we proceeded on our journey, without meeting with any obstruction.' Jean Gardner, who is described as 'a young woman of very surpassing beauty,' married George Hill, one of those members of the sect who emigrated to America, and is understood to have died of fever in Philadelphia in 1793.

* If Burns visited Jean Gardner at Auchengibbert, he must have done so when he was living at Ellisland. Of this there is no evidence in his poems or letters. The Rev. J. K. Hewison, of Rothesay, in a careful article on 'Burns and the Buchanites,' contributed to the *Scots Magazine* for October 1892, more than inclines to the opinion that the 'darling Jean' of the 'Epistle to Davie' was Jean Gardner, on the ground that that poem is dated 'January 1785,' in the copy presented to Robert Aiken—a date which precedes the period when the poet is supposed to have become intimate with Jean Armour. But it is at least possible that, as Mr Scott Douglas remarks, 'we must not conclude that the *whole* of the poem was completed at so early a date' as January 1785. All things considered, Jean Gardner must be accounted the most shadowy of Burns's heroines, if she can fairly be considered a heroine at all.

We now proceed with the entries in the Common-place Book:

EGOTISMS FROM MY OWN SENSATIONS.*

May 4, 5, or 6 [1784 ?]

I don't well know what is the reason of it, but somehow or other, though I am, when I have a mind, pretty generally beloved, yet I never could get the art of commanding respect. I imagine it is owing to my being deficient in what Sterne calls 'that understrapping virtue of discretion.' I am so apt to a *lapsus linguæ*, that I sometimes think the character of a certain great man I have read of somewhere is very much *apropos* to myself—that he was 'a compound of great talents and great folly.'

N.B.—To try if I can discover the causes of this wretched infirmity, and, if possible, to mend it.

Between this entry and the next, which is dated August, he inserts a few snatches of verse, which, however, are possibly the product of a somewhat later period:

Tho' cruel fate should bid us part,
  Far as the pole and line,
Her dear idea round my heart
  Should tenderly entwine.
Tho' mountains rise, and deserts howl,
  And oceans roar between;
Yet, dearer than my deathless soul,
  I still would love my Jean.

One night as I did wander,
  When corn begins to shoot,
I sat me down to ponder,
  Upon an auld tree-root:
Auld Ayr ran by before me,
  And bicker'd to the seas; ran rapidly
A cushat crooded o'er me, wood-pigeon cooed
  That echoed through the braes.

* The 'Egotisms from my own Sensations,' with the four poetical pieces following, do not appear in the original Common-place Book. They appear to have been interpolated by Cromek in the version of that Book given in the *Reliques* in 1808.

RANTIN, ROVIN ROBIN.

TUNE—*Dainty Davie.*

There was a lad was born in Kyle,
But whatna day o' whatna style, what
I doubt it 's hardly worth the while
To be sae nice wi' Robin.

Chor.—Robin was a rovin boy,
Rantin, rovin, rantin, rovin, Reckless or frolicsome
Robin was a rovin boy,
Rantin, rovin Robin!

Our monarch's * hindmost year but ane
Was five-and-twenty days begun,
'Twas then a blast o' Janwar' win'
Blew hansel † in on Robin.

The gossip keekit in his loof, peeped—palm
Quo' scho, 'Wha lives will see the proof, she
This waly boy will be nae coof: goodly—fool
I think we'll ca' him Robin.'

'He 'll hae misfortunes great an' sma',
But ay a heart aboon them a', above
He 'll be a credit till us a',—
We 'll a' be proud o' Robin.'

'But sure as three times three mak nine,
I see by ilka score and line,
This chap will dearly like our kin',
So leeze me on thee, Robin!' ‡ blessings

ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF ROBERT RUISSEAUX.§

Now Robin lies in his last lair,
He 'll gabble rhyme, nor sing nae mair;

* George II. died in 1760, the year after that of the poet's birth.

† A gift for a particular season, or the first money received on a special occasion.

‡ It has been said, but upon no good authority, that there was some foundation in fact for this tale of a gossip—a female tramp, who chanced to be present at the poet's birth, having actually uttered some such prophecies respecting the infant placed in her arms. Similar circumstances attended the birth of Mirabeau.

§ *Ruisseaux*, Fr. for 'rivulets,' a punning translation of his own name.

Cauld poverty, wi' hungry stare,
Nae mair shall fear him;
Nor anxious fear, nor cankert care,
E'er mair come near him.

To tell the truth, they seldom fash'd him, troubled
Except the moment that they crush'd him;
For sune as chance or fate had hush'd 'em,
Tho' e'er sae short,
Then wi' a rhyme or sang he lash'd 'em,
And thought it sport.

Tho' he was bred to kintra-wark, country-work
And counted was baith wight and stark, reckoned—vigorous—strong
Yet that was never Robin's mark
To mak a man;
But tell him, he was learn'd and clark, fit to be considered a scholar
Ye roos'd him then! praised

In the first of these sets of verses, Burns alludes to the attachment which he had formed for the most celebrated of all his heroines, and his future wife—JEAN. She was the daughter of a master-mason named Armour, residing in the village of Mauchline.* Her husband has described her at this period of her life as—

A dancin', sweet, young handsome quean,
Of guileless heart.

The acquaintance appears to have commenced not long after the poet took up his residence at Mossgiel. Races were held at Mauchline in the end of April, and it was customary on the occasion for the young men, with little ceremony, to invite such girls as they liked off the street into a dancing-hall, where a fiddler played for a penny a dance. The story goes, that Burns and Jean happened to be in the same dance, but not as partners, when some confusion and a little merriment were excited by his dog tracking his footsteps through the room. He playfully remarked to his partner, that 'he wished he could get any of the lasses to like him as well as his dog did.' A short time after, he passed through the Mauchline

* According to the parish register of Mauchline Jean Armour was born on the 25th February 1765. In Burns's family register the date given is 27th February 1767.

washing-green, where Jean, who had overheard his remark, was bleaching clothes. His dog running over the clothes, the girl desired him to call it off, and this led them into conversation. Archly referring to what passed at the dance, she asked if 'he had got any of the lasses to like him as well as his dog.' That was the beginning of their intimacy. The affections of Burns were quickly centred upon Jean. There were other girls in Mauchline, some with unquestionable attractions, but none could henceforth compete with her. So he himself tells us:

THE BELLES OF MAUCHLINE.

In Mauchline there dwells six proper young belles,
The pride of the place and its neighbourhood a';
Their carriage and dress, a stranger would guess,
In London or Paris they 'd gotten it a'.
Miss Miller is fine, Miss Markland 's divine,
Miss Smith she has wit, and Miss Betty is braw:
There 's beauty and fortune to get wi' Miss Morton,
But Armour 's the jewel for me o' them a'.*

Burns was now twenty-six years of age, yet he had composed only a few songs—although some of these were exquisite—upon the girls who had struck his fancy, and a small number of minor poems. He had hitherto, indeed, only expressed some of the predominant feelings of his own heart, or commented on some of

* We may here mention the fates of the six belles of Mauchline. Helen Miller, the first mentioned, daughter of John Miller, of the Sun Inn, Mauchline, married Burns's friend, Dr Mackenzie. Their son, John Whitefoord Mackenzie, a well-known literary and antiquarian collector, died in Edinburgh in the year 1884. Jean Markland was the daughter of George Markland, a Mauchline merchant, and was in 1779, along with her father and mother, charged before the kirk-session with attributing witchcraft to the wife of another local merchant; but the charge broke down. She married, in September 1788, James Findlay, the excise officer in Tarbolton, who was commissioned to instruct Burns in the arts of gauging and excise book-keeping, and who was introduced to her by the poet. Findlay removed to Greenock in 1792, and his wife died there in 1851 at the age of 86. The 'witty' Jean Smith married another friend of Burns, Mr James Candlish, an Edinburgh lecturer on medicine. A tablet erected to her memory in Old Calton Churchyard, Edinburgh, by her son, the Rev. Dr Candlish, the Free Church theologian and ecclesiastical leader, records that she died on 20th January 1854, aged 86. The 'braw' Betty Miller, sister of Helen Miller, became the wife of William Templeton, a merchant in Mauchline. She was born in 1768, married on 8th September 1794, and died at the birth of her first child. To her was addressed Burns's song, 'From thee, Eliza, I must go.' Christina Morton, a native of the parish, with which for several generations her family had been connected, married, on 27th December 1788, Robert Paterson, draper and general merchant, Mauchline, and had four sons and two daughters. Of 'Armour's' history immortality has taken charge.

the more striking circumstances of his own condition. The cultivation of poetry as an art, whether with a view to attaining perfection in it for its own sake, or as an aid to advancement in life, had not yet become a definite ambition. He was still without an aim—alternately groaning under the ill-requited labours of his farm and the darkness of all his worldly prospects, and indulging in merry bouts at mason-lodges, where care was for the time cast aside. A careful chronology is here of some importance in illustrating the literary history of Burns. It is a remarkable circumstance that the mass of the poetry which constitutes his chief claim to fame, burst from him in the course of a period which certainly did not exceed fifteen months.

In a well-known letter of Gilbert Burns it is affirmed that the Tarbolton period was one marked by little intellectual improvement. This is in the main true. During this period of seven or eight years Burns freely indulged his ardent love of reading; he used means to sharpen his intellect in the debating club; he wrote, as we have seen, excellent prose epistles to his father and his cousin, besides some love-songs, and a few short poems. Yet any progress he made was of a rambling and desultory nature, very different from what it might have been if he had all the time been steadily pursuing one intellectual object. From the summer of 1784, however, or a time not long subsequent, the views of Burns underwent a change.

The first genuine determination of his mind towards literary effort, the first appreciation of its usual aims and results, appears in certain entries in his Common-place Book, which are undated as regards the year, but may, though not without some hesitation, be ascribed to 1784. Here we see him at length beginning to view his literary powers as giving him at least a chance of ranking with the unknown poets of the past, from whom mainly Scotland derives her national stock of songs and ballads:

August.

However I am pleased with the works of our Scotch Poets, particularly the excellent Ramsay, and the still more excellent Ferguson, yet I am hurt to see other places of Scotland, their towns, rivers, woods, haughs, &c. immortalized in such celebrated performances, whilst my dear native country, the ancient Bailieries of Carrick, Kyle, & Cunningham, famous both in ancient & modern times for a gallant, and warlike race of inhabitants; a country where civil, & particularly religous Liberty have ever found their first support, & their last asylum; a country, the birthplace

of many famous Philosophers, Soldiers, & Statesmen, and the scene of many important events recorded in Scottish History, particularly a great many of the actions of the GLORIOUS WALLACE, the SAVIOUR of his country; yet, we have never had one Scotch Poet of any eminence, to make the fertile banks of Irvine, the romantic woodlands & sequestered scenes of Aire, and the heathy, mountainous source, & winding sweep of Doon emulate Tay, Forth, Ettrick, Tweed, &c. This is a complaint I would gladly remedy, but Alas! I am far unequal to the task, both in native genius & education.

Obscure I am, & obscure I must be, though no young Poet, nor Young Soldier's heart ever beat more fondly for fame than mine.

> And if there is no other scene of Being
> Where my insatiate wish may have its fill;
> This something at my heart that heaves for room,
> My best, my dearest part was made in vain.

August.

A FRAGMENT.

TUNE—*I had a horse & I had nae mair.*

When first I came to Stewart Kyle,*
  My mind it was na steady;
Where'er I gaed, where'er I rade,
  A mistress still I had ay:

But when I came roun' by Mauchline toun,
  Not dreadin anybody,
My heart was caught, before I thought,
  And by a Mauchline lady.†

September.

There is a certain irregularity in the old Scotch Songs, a redundancy of syllables with respect to that exactness of Accent & measure that the English Poetry requires, but which glides in, most melodiously with the

* Kyle is the middle of the three divisions of Ayrshire; having been at one time almost entirely covered with forest, it may have derived its name from the Celtic *coille*, a wood. It is bounded on the north by the river Irvine, which divides it from Cunninghame, on the north-east by Lanarkshire, on the south by Kirkcudbrightshire, on the east by Dumfriesshire, on the south-west by the river Doon, which divides it from Carrick, and on the west by the Firth of Clyde. Kyle is divided by the river Ayr, which rises on its eastern border and traverses it westward to the firth, into Kyle Stewart on the north, and King's Kyle on the south. Burns 'first came to Stewart Kyle' in 1777, when he removed with the family from Mount Oliphant to Lochlea.

† If the 'Mauchline lady' was Jean Armour, this poem—a parody of the song to the music of which it was set by the author—gives support to the belief that the poet had seen and admired, if not spoken to her, in the spring or early summer of 1784.

respective tunes to which they are set. For instance, the fine old Song of the *The Mill Mill O*, to give it a plain prosaic reading it halts prodigiously out of measure; on the other hand, the Song set to the same tune in Bremner's collection of Scotch songs which begins "To Fanny fair could I impart" &c. it is most exact measure, and yet, let them be both sung before a real Critic, one above the biasses of prejudice, but a thorough Judge of Nature,—how flat & spiritless will the last appear, how trite, and lamely methodical, compared with the wild-warbling cadence, the heart-moving melody of the first.—This particularly is the case with all those airs which end with a hypermetrical syllable.—There is a degree of wild irregularity in many of the compositions & Fragments which are daily sung to them by my compeers, the common people—a certain happy arrangement of old Scotch syllables, & yet, very frequently, nothing, not even *like* rhyme, or sameness of jingle at the ends of the lines. This has made me sometimes imagine that perhaps, it might be possible for a Scotch Poet, with a nice, judicious ear, to set compositions to many of our most favorite airs, particularly that class of them mentioned above, independent of rhyme altogether.

There is a noble Sublimity, a heart-melting tenderness in some of these ancient fragments, which show them to be the work of a masterly hand; and it has often given me many a heartake to reflect that such glorious old Bards—Bards, who, very probably, owed all their talents to native genius, yet have described the exploits of Heroes, the pangs of Disappointment, and the meltings of Love with such fine strokes of Nature, and, O mortifying to a Bard's vanity their very names are "buried 'mongst the wreck of things which were."

O ye illustrious Names unknown! who could feel so strongly and describe so well! the last, the meanest of the MUSES TRAIN—one who, though far inferiour to your flights, yet eyes your path, and with trembling wing would sometimes soar after you—a poor, rustic BARD UNKNOWN, pays this sympathetic pang to your memory! Some of you tell us, with all the charms of Verse, that you have been unfortunate in the world—unfortunate in love; he too has felt all the unfitness of a poetic heart for the struggle of a busy, bad World; he has felt the loss of his little fortune, the loss of friends, and worse than all, the loss of the Woman he adored! Like you, all his consolation was his Muse—She taught him in rustic measures to complain—Happy, could he have done it with your strength of imagination, and flow of Verse! May the turf rest lightly on your bones! And may you now enjoy that solace and rest which this world rarely gives to the heart tuned to all the feelings of Poesy and love!

The following fragment is done, something in imitation of the manner of a noble old Scottish Piece called *M'Millan's Peggy*, and sings to the tune of Galla Water.—My Montgomerie's Peggy was my Deity for six, or eight months. She had been bred, tho' as the world says, without any

just pretence for it, in a style of life rather elegant.—But as Vanbrugh says in one of his comedies, my 'dam'd Star Found me out' there too, for though I began the affair, merely in a *gaieté de cœur*, or to tell the truth, what would scarcely be believed, a vanity of showing my parts in Courtship, particularly my abilities at a Billet doux, which I always piqu'd myself upon, made me lay siege to her; and when, as I always do in my foolish gallantries, I had battered myself into a very warm affection for her, she told me, one day in a flag of truce, that her fortress had been for some time before the rightful property of another; but with the greatest friendship and politeness, she offered me every alliance, except actual possession.—I found out afterwards, that what she told me of a preengagement was really true; but it cost me some heart Achs to get rid of the affair.—

I have even tried to imitate in this extempore thing, that irregularity in the rhyme which when judiciously done, has such a fine effect on the ear.

FRAGMENT.

TUNE—*Galla Water.*

Altho' my bed were in yon muir, &c.*

September.

Another Fragment in imitation of an old Scotch Song, well known among the Country ingle sides—I cannot tell the name, neither of the Song nor the Tune, but they are in fine Unison with one another.—By the way, these old Scottish airs are so nobly sentimental that when one would compose to them; to *south* the tune, as our Scotch phrase is, over & over, is the readiest way to catch the inspiration and raise the Bard into that glorious enthusiasm so strongly characteristic of our old Scotch Poetry.—I shall here set down one verse of the piece mentioned above, both to mark the Song & tune I mean, and likewise as a debt I owe to the author, as the repeating of that verse has lighted up my flame a thousand times.

Alluding to the misfortunes he feelingly laments before this verse:

'When clouds in skies do come together
To hide the brightness of the sun,
There will surely be some pleasant weather
When a' thir storms are past and gone.'

Though fickle Fortune has deceived me,
She promis'd fair and perform'd but ill;
Of mistress, friends, and wealth bereav'd me,
Yet I bear a heart shall support me still.—

* See p. 64, the song 'Montgomerie's Peggy.'

I 'll act with prudence as far as I 'm able,
But if success I must never find,
Then come misfortune, I bid thee welcome,
I 'll meet thee with an undaunted mind.

The above was an extempore under the pressure of a heavy train of Misfortunes, which, indeed, threatened to undo me altogether.—It was just at the close of that dreadful period mentioned Page 8th;* and though the weather has brightened up a little with me, yet there has always been since, a "tempest brewing round me in the grim sky" of futurity, which I pretty plainly see will, some time or other, perhaps ere long overwhelm me, and drive me into some doleful dell to pine in solitary, squallid wretchedness. However as I hope my poor, country Muse, who, all rustic, akward, and unpolished as she is, has more charms for me than any other of the pleasures of life beside—as I hope she will not then desert me, I may, even then, learn to be, if not happy, at least easy, and south a sang to sooth my misery.

'Twas at the same time I set about composing an air in the old Scotch style.—I am not Musical Scholar enough to prick down my tune properly, so it can never see the light, and perhaps 'tis no great matter, but the following were the verses I composed to suit it.

O raging Fortune's withering blast
Has laid my leaf full low!
O raging Fortune's withering blast
Has laid my leaf full low!

My stem was fair, my bud was green,
My blossom sweet did blow;
The dew fell fresh, the sun rose mild,
And made my branches grow;

But luckless Fortune's northern storms
Laid a' my blossoms low,—
But luckless Fortune's northern storms
Laid a' my blossoms low!

The tune consisted of three parts, so that the above verses just went through the whole Air.

October 1785.

If ever any young man, on the vestibule of the world, chance to throw his eye over these pages, let him pay a warm attention to the following observations; as I assure him they are the fruit of a poor devil's dear bought Experience.—I have, literaly like that great Poet and great

* Reference is here made to that part of the Common-place Book bearing date March 1784. See p. 104.

Gallant, and by consequence, that great Fool, Solomon,—"turned my eyes to behold Madness and Folly"—Nay I have, with all the ardor of a lively, fanciful and whimsical imagination, accompanied with a warm, feeling, Poetic heart—shaken hands with their intoxicating friendship.

In the first place, let my Pupil, as he tenders his own peace, keep up a regular, warm intercourse with the Deity, . . .

Here the Common-place Book abruptly terminates.

To quote Gilbert's letter: 'Among the earliest of his poems was the "Epistle to Davie." Robert often composed without any regular plan. When anything made a strong impression on his mind, so as to rouse it to any poetic exertion, he would give way to the impulse, and embody the thought in rhyme. If he hit on two or three stanzas to please him, he would then think of proper introductory, connecting, and concluding stanzas; hence the middle of a poem was often first produced. It was, I think, in summer 1784, when in the interval of harder labour, he and I were weeding in the garden (kail-yard), that he repeated to me the principal part of this epistle. I believe the first idea of Robert's becoming an author was started on this occasion. I was much pleased with the epistle, and said to him I was of opinion it would bear being printed.'

There is in existence a copy, in the poet's handwriting, which bears date January 1785, and has the following title—'An Epistle to Davy, a Brother-Poet, Lover, Ploughman, and Fiddler.'

EPISTLE TO DAVIE,

A BROTHER POET.

While winds frae off Ben-Lomond blaw,*
An' bar the doors wi' drivin' snaw,
  An' hing us owre the ingle, — make us sit close to the fireside
I set me down to pass the time,
An' spin a verse or twa o' rhyme,
  In hamely, westlin jingle:
While frosty winds blaw in the drift,
  Ben to the chimla lug,†
I grudge a wee the great-folk's gift, — little
  That live sae bien an' snug: — comfortably

* That is, from the north.

† An expressive Scotticism meaning 'in to the very fireside.'

I tent less, and want less — care for
Their roomy fire-side;
But hanker, and canker,
To see their cursed pride.

It 's hardly in a body's pow'r,
To keep, at times, frae being sour,
To see how things are shar'd;
How best o' chiels are whyles in want, — men—sometimes
While coofs on countless thousands rant, — fools—live recklessly
And ken na how to ware 't; — know—spend
But Davie, lad, ne'er fash your head, — trouble
Tho' we hae little gear; — wealth
We 're fit to win our daily bread,
As lang 's we 're hale and fier: — vigorous
'Mair spier na, nor fear na,'* — ask
Auld age ne'er mind a feg; — fig
The last o' 't, the warst o' 't,
Is only but to beg.†

* Ramsay.

† 'The old-remembered beggar, even in my own time, like the baccoch, or travelling cripple of Ireland, was expected to merit his quarters by something beyond an exposition of his distresses. He was often a talkative, facetious fellow, prompt at repartee, and not withheld from exercising his power that way by any respect of persons, his patched cloak giving him the privilege of the ancient jester. To be a *guid crack*—that is, to possess talents for conversation—was essential to the trade of a "puir body" of the more esteemed class; and Burns, who delighted in the amusement their discourses afforded, seems to have looked forward with gloomy firmness to the possibility of himself becoming, one day or other, a member of their itinerant society. In his poetical works, it is alluded to so often as perhaps to indicate that he considered the consummation as not utterly impossible. Thus, in the fine dedication of his works to Gavin Hamilton, he says:

"And when I downa yoke a naig,
Then, Lord be thankit, I can beg."

Again, in his "Epistle to Davie, a brother poet," he states that, in their closing career,

"The last o' 't, the warst o' 't,
Is only but to beg."

And after having remarked, that

"To lie in kilns and barns at e'en,
When banes are crazed, and bluid is thin,
Is doubtless great distress,"

the bard reckons up, with true poetical spirit, that free enjoyment of the beauties of nature which might counterbalance the hardship and uncertainty of the life even of a mendicant. In one of his prose letters, to which I have lost the reference, he details this idea yet more seriously, and dwells upon it, as not ill adapted to his habits and powers. As the life of a Scottish mendicant of the eighteenth century seems to have been contemplated without much horror by Robert Burns, the author can hardly have erred in giving to Edie Ochiltree something of poetical character and personal dignity above the more abject of his miserable

To lye in kilns and barns at e'en,
When banes are craz'd, and bluid is thin,
Is, doubtless, great distress!
Yet then content could make us blest;
Ev'n then, sometimes, we'd snatch a taste
Of truest happiness.
The honest heart that 's free frae a'
Intended fraud or guile,
However Fortune kick the ba', ball
Has ay some cause to smile;
An' mind still, you 'll find still,
A comfort this nae sma'; small
Nae mair then, we 'll care then,
Nae farther we can fa'. fall

What tho', like commoners of air,
We wander out, we know not where,
But either house or hal', without—shelter
Yet nature's charms, the hills and woods,
The sweeping vales, an' foaming floods,
Are free alike to all.
In days when daisies deck the ground,
And blackbirds whistle clear,
With honest joy our hearts will bound,
To see the coming year:
On braes when we please then,
We 'll sit an' sowth a tune; hum
Syne rhyme till 't, we 'll time till 't,
An' sing 't when we hae done.

It 's no in titles nor in rank;
It 's no in wealth like Lon'on bank,
To purchase peace and rest:

calling. The class had, in fact, some privileges. A lodging, such as it was, was readily granted to them in some of the outhouses; and the awmous (alms) of a handful of meal (called a gowpen) was scarce denied by the poorest cottager. The mendicant disposed these, according to their different quality, in various bags around his person, and thus carried about with him the principal part of his sustenance, which he literally received for the asking. At the houses of the gentry, his cheer was mended by scraps of broken meat, and perhaps a Scottish "twal-penny," or English penny, which was expended in snuff or whisky. In fact, these indolent peripatetics suffered much less real hardship and want of food than the poor peasants from whom they received alms.'—Sir Walter Scott, *Notes to The Antiquary.*

It 's no in makin muckle, mair; — much
It 's no in books, it 's no in lear, — learning
To make us truly blest:
If happiness hae not her seat
An' centre in the breast,
We may be wise, or rich, or great,
But never can be blest;
Nae treasures nor pleasures
Could make us happy lang;
The heart ay 's the part ay — always
That makes us right or wrang.

Think ye, that sic as you and I,
Wha drudge an' drive thro' wet and dry,
Wi' never ceasing toil;
Think ye, are we less blest than they,
Wha scarcely tent us in their way, — notice
As hardly worth their while?
Alas! how aft, in haughty mood,
God's creatures they oppress!
Or else, neglecting a' that 's good,
They riot in excess!
Baith careless and fearless
Of either heaven or hell;
Esteeming, and deeming
It a' an idle tale!

Then let us cheerfu' acquiesce,
Nor make our scanty pleasures less,
By pining at our state:
And, even should misfortunes come,
I, here wha sit, hae met wi' some—
An 's thankfu' for them yet,
They gie the wit of age to youth;
They let us ken oursel;
They make us see the naked truth—
The real guid and ill:
Tho' losses an' crosses
Be lessons right severe,

There 's wit there, ye 'll get there,
Ye 'll find nae other where.

But tent me, Davie, ace o' hearts! note what I say
(To say aught less wad wrang the cartes,
And flatt'ry I detest)—
This life has joys for you and I;
An' joys that riches ne'er could buy;
An' joys the very best.
There 's a' the pleasures o' the heart,
The lover an' the frien';
Ye hae your Meg,* your dearest part,
And I my darling Jean!
It warms me, it charms me,
To mention but her name:
It heats me, it beets me, makes me glow with rapture
An' sets me a' on flame!

O all ye Pow'rs who rule above!
O Thou whose very self art love!
Thou know'st my words sincere!
The life-blood streaming thro' my heart,
Or my more dear immortal part,
Is not more fondly dear!

* Margaret Orr, a domestic servant to Mrs Stewart of Stair House. The story goes that 'Burns, accompanying his friend on a visit to Stair, on one occasion found some other lasses there who were good singers, and communicated to them some of his songs in manuscript. Chance threw one of these in the way of Mrs Stewart, who, being struck by its elegance and tenderness, resolved to become acquainted with the author. Accordingly, on his next visit to the house, he was asked to go into the drawing-room to see Mrs Stewart, who thus became the first friend he had above his own rank in life.' 'Meg' did not become the wife of 'Davie.' She married John Paton, a shoemaker, and died in 1837. Sillar, who had removed to Irvine about two years before the 'Epistle' was written, or at all events completed, and started in business as a grocer, published his 'Poems,' as has already been mentioned, in 1789. This venture met with neither literary nor financial success, and Sillar became bankrupt. He next tried to obtain literary work in Edinburgh, but failed. Returning to Irvine, he 'opened a school, chiefly for the instruction of young seamen in the science of navigation.' Fortune now smiled upon him, for not only did his school prosper, but through the deaths of three brothers he fell heir to considerable wealth. He entered the Town Council of Irvine, and had served in the magistracy before he died, in 1830, at the age of seventy. 'Intensely parsimonious,' writes one of his biographers, 'he refused to contribute towards the poet's monument on the banks of the Doon; but he loved to discourse on his intimacy with the Bard, and to celebrate each anniversary of his birth.'

When heart-corroding care and grief
  Deprive my soul of rest,
Her dear idea brings relief
  And solace to my breast.
    Thou Being, All-seeing,
      O hear my fervent pray'r;
    Still take her, and make her
      Thy most peculiar care!

All hail; ye tender feelings dear!
The smile of love, the friendly tear,
  The sympathetic glow!
Long since, this world's thorny ways
Had number'd out my weary days,
  Had it not been for you!
Fate still has blest me with a friend,
  In ev'ry care and ill;
And oft a more endearing band—
  A tie more tender still.
    It lightens, it brightens
      The tenebrific scene, dark
    To meet with, an' greet with
      My Davie, or my Jean!

O, how that *Name* inspires my style!
The words come skelpin, rank an' file, rattling
  Amaist before I ken! almost
The ready measure rins as fine,
As Phœbus an' the famous Nine
  Were glowrin owre my pen. looking
My spavet Pegasus will limp, spavined
  Till ance he 's fairly het; heated
And then he 'll hilch, and stilt, an' jimp, hobble—limp —jump
  And rin an unco fit: at a rapid pace
    But least then the beast then
      Should rue this hasty ride,
    I 'll light now, and dight now wipe down
      His sweaty, wizen'd hide. withered

Gilbert says in addition: 'I thought it [the epistle] at least equal, if not superior, to many of Allan Ramsay's epistles, and that the merit of these, and much other Scottish poetry, seemed to consist principally in the knack of the expression; but here there was a strain of interesting sentiment, and the Scotticism of the language scarcely seemed affected, but appeared to be the natural language of the poet; that, besides, there was certainly some novelty in a poet pointing out the consolations that were in store for him when he should go a-begging. Robert seemed very well pleased with my criticism, and we talked of sending it to some magazine; but as this plan afforded no opportunity of learning how it would take, the idea was dropped.'

In the seed-time of 1785—the date is given on the poet's own authority—he attended a masonic meeting at Tarbolton, at which one of the brethren present was John Wilson, schoolmaster of the parish. To eke out a living, as Gilbert tells us, 'Wilson had set up a shop of grocery goods. Having accidentally fallen in with some medical books, and become most hobby-horsically attached to the study of medicine, he had added the sale of a few medicines to his little trade. He had got a shop-bill printed, at the bottom of which, overlooking his own incapacity, he had advertised that "Advice would be given in common disorders at the shop gratis."' On this occasion he made a somewhat ostentatious display of his medical attainments. It is said that Burns and he had a dispute, in which the schoolmaster paraded his therapeutics too offensively. Be this as it may, going home that night Burns conceived, and partly composed, his poem 'Death and Dr Hornbook.' 'These circumstances,' adds Gilbert, 'he related when he repeated the verses to me next afternoon, as I was holding the plough, and he was letting the water off the field beside me.'

DEATH AND DR HORNBOOK,

A TRUE STORY.

Some books are lies frae end to end,
And some great lies were never penn'd:
Ev'n ministers they hae been kenn'd,
In holy rapture,

A rousing whid at times to vend,* nib
And nail 't wi' Scripture.

But this that I am gaun to tell, going
Which lately on a night befel,
Is just as true 's the Deil 's in hell
Or Dublin city:
That e'er he nearer comes oursel
'S a muckle pity.

The clachan yill had made me canty, village ale—merry
I was na fou, but just had plenty; drunk
I stacher'd whyles, but yet took tent ay staggered at times —care
To free the ditches;
An' hillocks, stanes, an' bushes, kenn'd ay
Frae ghaists an' witches.

The rising moon began to glowre stare
The distant *Cumnock* hills out-owre:
To count her horns, wi' a' my pow'r,
I set mysel;
But whether she had three or four,
I cou'd na tell.

I was come round about the hill,
An' todlin down on *Willie's mill*,† tottering
Setting my staff wi' a' my skill,
To keep me sicker; secure
Tho' leeward whyles, against my will, sometimes
I took a bicker. short race

I there wi' *Something* did forgather,
That pat me in an eerie swither; frightened hesitation

* In the earlier editions this line ran 'Great lies and nonsense baith to vend.' In the 1794 edition it appeared as in our text.

† Tarbolton Mill, situated on the rivulet Fail, about two hundred yards to the east of the village, on the road to Mossgiel; then occupied by William Muir, an intimate friend of the Burns family; it was called *Willie's Mill*, after him. 'Mr William Muir, Tarbolton Mill,' appears in the list of subscribers to the Edinburgh edition of the *Poems*, in which this 'true story' first appeared.

An awfu' scythe, out-owre ae shouther,
Clear-dangling, hang;
A three-tae'd leister on the ither — fish-spear
Lay, large an' lang.

Its stature seem'd lang Scotch ells twa,
The queerest shape that e'er I saw,
For fient a wame it had ava; — Deuce!—belly
And then its shanks,
They were as thin, as sharp an' sma'
As cheeks o' branks.*

'Guid e'en,' quo' I; 'Friend, hae ye been mawin, — mowing
'When ither folk are busy sawin?' — sowing
It seem'd to mak a kind o' stan',
But naething spak;
At length, says I: 'Friend! whare ye gaun?
'Will ye go back?'

It spak right howe,—'My name is *Death*, — hollow
'But be na' fley'd.'—Quoth I, 'Guid faith, — frightened
'Ye 're may be come to stap my breath;
'But tent me, billie; — give heed to me—comrade
'I red ye weel, tak care o' skaith, — advise—harm
'See, there 's a gully!' — clasp-knife

'Gudeman,' quo' he, 'put up your whittle, — knife
'I 'm no design'd to try its mettle;
'But if I did, I wad be kittle — apt
'To be mislear'd;† — rude
'I wad na mind it, no that spittle
'Out-owre my beard.'‡

'Weel, weel!' says I, 'a bargain be 't;
'Come, gies your hand, an' sae we 're gree't; — agreed

* Branks—a kind of wooden frame, forming, with a rope, a bridle for cows.

† The phrase 'kittle to be mislear'd,' may best be interpreted as 'like to prove an awkward customer.'

‡ The scythe and the beard suggest that the poet had the figure of Time in view, rather than that of Death.

'We 'll ease our shanks an' tak a seat— limbs
'Come, gie 's your news;
'This while ye hae been mony a gate, road
'At mony a house.' *

'Ay, ay!' quo' he, an' shook his head,
'It 's e'en a lang, lang time indeed
'Sin' I began to nick the thread, cut
'An' choke the breath:
'Folk maun do something for their bread,
'An' sae maun *Death*.

'Sax thousand years are near-hand fled
'Sin' I was to the butching bred, butcher's trade
'An' mony a scheme in vain 's been laid,
'To stap or scar me; stop—scare
'Till ane *Hornbook's* † ta'en up the trade,
'And faith! he 'll waur me. worst

'Ye ken *Jock Hornbook* i' the Clachan— village
'Deil mak his king's-hood ‡ in a spleuchan!— tobacco-pouch
'He 's grown sae weel acquaint wi' *Buchan* §
'And ither chaps,
'The weans haud out their fingers laughin, children
'An' pouk my hips. pluck

'See, here 's a scythe, an' there 's a dart,
'They hae pierc'd mony a gallant heart;
'But Doctor *Hornbook* wi' his art
'An' cursèd skill,
'Has made them baith no worth a f—t,
'D—n'd haet they 'll kill! they will not kill anything

'Twas but yestreen, nae farther gane, yesterday
'I threw a noble throw at ane;

* Alluding to a recent epidemical fever.

† This gentleman, Dr Hornbook, is, professionally, a brother of the sovereign Order of the Ferula; but, by intuition and inspiration, is at once an Apothecary, Surgeon, and Physician. —*R. B., in the first Edinburgh edition.*

‡ 'King's-hood' is the second of the four stomachs of a ruminant. This line may be freely rendered, 'The devil make a pouch of his stomach!'

§ Buchan's *Domestic Medicine*, then a popular book, and of course a readily available manual for a village doctor. Dr Buchan died in 1808.

'Wi' less, I 'm sure, I 've hundreds slain;
'But deil-ma-care, no matter!
'It just play'd dirl on the bane, a short, tremulous stroke
'But did nae mair.

'*Hornbook* was by, wi' ready art,
'An' had sae fortify'd the part,
'That when I lookèd to my dart,
'It was sae blunt,
'Fient haet o''t wad hae pierc'd the heart not a bit
'Of a kail-runt. stalk of green kale

'I drew my scythe in sic a fury,
'I near-hand cowpit wi' my hurry, tumbled over
'But yet the bauld *Apothecary*
'Withstood the shock;
'I might as weel hae try'd a quarry
'O' hard whin rock.

'Ev'n them he canna get attended,
'Altho' their face he ne'er had kend it,
'Just —— in a kail-blade, an' send it,
'As soon 's he smells 't,
'Baith their disease, and what will mend it,
'At once he tells 't.

'And then a' doctor's saws an' whittles, knives
'Of a' dimensions, shapes, an' mettles,
'A' kind o' boxes, mugs, an' bottles,
'He 's sure to hae;
'Their Latin names as fast he rattles
As A B C.

'Calces o' fossils, earths, and trees;
'True sal-marinum o' the seas;
'The farina of beans an' pease,
'He has 't in plenty;
'Aqua-fontis, what you please,
'He can content ye.

'Forbye some new, uncommon weapons,
'Urinus spiritus of capons;
'Or mite-horn shavings, filings, scrapings,
'Distill'd *per se*;
'Sal-alkali o' midge-tail-clippings,
'And mony mae.'

'Wae 's me for *Johnie Ged's* Hole* now,'
Quoth I, 'if that thae news be true!
'His braw calf-ward† where gowans grew — daisies
'Sae white and bonie,
'Nae doubt they 'll rive it wi' the plew, — tear it up—plough
'They 'll ruin *Johnie!*'

The creature grain'd an eldritch laugh, — unearthly
And says, 'Ye needna yoke the pleugh,
'Kirkyards will soon be till'd eneugh,
'Take ye na fear:
'They 'll a' be trenched wi' mony a sheugh, — furrow
'In twa-three year.

'Whare I kill'd ane, a fair strae death, — death in (a straw) bed
'By loss o' blood or want of breath,
'This night I 'm free to take my aith,
'That *Hornbook's* skill
'Has clad a score i' their last claith, — grave-cloth
'By drap an' pill. — potion

'An honest wabster to his trade, — weaver
'Whase wife's twa nieves were scarce weel-bred, — fists
'Gat tippence-worth to mend her head,
'When it was sair;
'The wife slade cannie to her bed, — slid gently
'But ne'er spak mair.

'A country laird had ta'en the batts, — colic
'Or some curmurring in his guts, — slight attack of the gripes

* The parish gravedigger.
† The churchyard, which had occasionally been used as an enclosure for calves.

'His only son for *Hornbook* sets,
An' pays him well:
'The lad, for twa guid gimmer-pets, young ewes
'Was laird himsel.

'A bonie lass—ye kend her name—
'Some ill-brewn drink had hov'd her wame;
'She trusts hersel, to hide the shame,
In *Hornbook's* care;
'*Horn* sent her aff to her lang hame,
'To hide it there.

'That 's just a swatch o' *Hornbook's* way; example
'Thus goes he on from day to day,
'Thus does he poison, kill, an' slay,
'An 's weel paid for 't;
'Yet stops me o' my lawfu' prey,
'Wi' his d—d dirt:

'But, hark! I 'll tell you of a plot,
'Tho' dinna ye be speaking o' 't;
'I 'll nail the self-conceited sot,
'As dead 's a herrin:
'Niest time we meet, I 'll wad a groat, wager
'He gets his fairin!' reward

But just as he began to tell,
The auld kirk-hammer strak the bell struck
Some wee short hour ayont the *twal*, twelve
Which rais'd us baith: roused
I took the way that pleas'd mysel,
And sae did *Death*.*

* It was long believed, on the authority of Lockhart, that the schoolmaster was compelled, through the ridicule occasioned by Burns's satire, to close not only his shop but his school, in consequence of his pupils deserting him. But Mr E. K. Macpherson, schoolhouse, Tarbolton, writing to the *Burns Chronicle* for 1895, says, 'I have by me an account-book of the funds of Tarbolton session containing the signature of John Wilson as session-clerk of Tarbolton, as late as January 8th, 1793. I believe the poem was pretty well public property in Tarbolton in 1785, so Wilson's skin seems to have been no thinner than that of his modern brethren had need to be.' It may also be noted that Wilson was secretary to the Tarbolton Lodge from 8th August 1782 till some time in 1787. He wrote many of the minutes, and signed two of them as 'Master *pro tempore*,' and a third as 'M. *P. T.*' Wilson left Tarbolton, in consequence, it is said, of a dispute about salary with the heritors,

Now commences that burst of poetry of which we have spoken as so remarkable in Burns's history. Early in the year (1785), on Fasten's E'en (Shrovetide), there was a *rocking* at Mossgiel. Gilbert explains this term: 'It is derived from those primitive times when the country-women employed their spare hours in spinning on a rock or distaff. This simple instrument is a very portable one, and well fitted to the social inclination of meeting in a neighbour's house; hence the phrase of *going a-rocking*, or *with the rock*. As the connection the phrase had with the implement was forgotten when the rock gave place to the spinning-wheel, the phrase came to be used by both sexes on social occasions, and men talk of going with their rocks as well as women.' This Fasten's E'en *rocking* was therefore a simple social meeting at Mossgiel, singing being part of the entertainment. One of the party sang a song which was understood to be the composition of a man well up in years, named Lapraik, residing at Muirkirk, but which was essentially an adaptation of a poem which had appeared in *Ruddiman's Weekly Magazine* for October 14, 1773. It was expressive of the happy affection of a husband for his wife during a period of misfortunes, and ran as follows:

When I upon thy bosom lean,
  Enraptured I do call thee mine,
I glory in those sacred ties,
  That made us ane wha ance were twain.
A mutual flame inspires us baith,
  The tender look, the melting kiss;
Even years shall ne'er destroy our love,
  Some sweet sensation new will rise.

Have I a wish, 'tis all for thee,
  I know thy wish is me to please;
Our moments pass so sweet away,
  That numbers on us look and gaze.
Well pleased to see our happy days,
  They bid us live and still love on;
And if some cares should chance to rise,
  Thy bosom still shall be my home.

and settled in Glasgow, where he long kept a school for boys and girls. He ultimately became session-clerk of Gorbals parish in the same city. He died on January 13, 1839.

'Gilbert Burns used to relate that Wilson once spoke to him of the poem. He said it was pretty severe in some things; but, on the whole, it was *rather* a compliment. This qualifying "rather" amused Gilbert very much.'—*Letter of Miss Isabella Begg.*

I 'll lull me there, and take my rest,
And if that aught disturb my fair,
I 'll bid her laugh her cares all out,
And beg her not to drop a tear.
Have I a joy, 'tis all her own,
Her heart and mine are all the same;
They 're like the woodbine round the tree,
That 's twined till death shall us disjoin.

Burns was so much pleased with the poem,* that soon after he sent a versified epistle to the supposed author:

EPISTLE TO J. LAPRAIK,†

AN OLD SCOTTISH BARD.

While briers an' woodbines budding green,
An' paitricks scraichin loud at e'en, partridges screeching
An' morning poussie whiddin seen, hare moving quickly
Inspire my muse,
This freedom, in an unknown frien',
I pray excuse.

On Fasten-e'en we had a rockin,
To ca' the crack and weave our stockin; chat
And there was muckle fun and jokin,
Ye need na doubt;
At length we had a hearty yokin, match
At 'sang about.'

* Burns subsequently improved the song, and sent it for insertion in the third volume of *The Scots Musical Museum*.

† Lapraik is apparently the same name with Lekprevick or Leprevick, honourable in the history of Scottish literature, as having been borne by the printer to James VI., and who in the second half of the sixteenth century published a collected edition of the Scottish statutes. In 1364, David II. confirmed a charter of William de Cunningham, Lord of Carrick, to James de Leprevick, of half the lands of Polkairne, in the parish of Ochiltree, King's Kyle (*Wood's Peerage*, i. 321)—which shows that there were persons of that name at an early period connected with the district. John Lapraik of Dalquhram, in the parish of Muirkirk, was born in 1727, and was therefore bordering on sixty when Burns made his acquaintance. The poet described him as 'a worthy, facetious old fellow, late of Dalfram, near Muirkirk, which little property he was obliged to sell in consequence of some connection as security for some persons concerned in that villainous bubble, the Ayr Bank.' He was thrown into prison for debt, and there wrote—or adapted—the poem which excited the poet's admiration.

There was ae sang, amang the rest,
Aboon them a' it pleas'd me best,
That some kind husband had addrest
To some sweet wife;
It thirl'd the heart-strings thro' the breast, thrilled
A' to the life.

I 've scarce heard ought describ'd sae weel,
What gen'rous, manly bosoms feel;
Thought I, 'can this be Pope, or Steele,
Or Beattie's wark?'
They tauld me 'twas an odd kind chiel
About Muirkirk.

It pat me fidgin-fain to hear 't, excitedly eager
An' sae about him there I spier't; inquired
Then a' that kent him round declar'd
He had *ingine;* genius
That nane excell'd it, few cam near 't,
It was sae fine:

That, set him to a pint of ale,
An' either douce or merry tale, grave
Or rhymes an' sangs he 'd made himsel,
Or witty catches—
'Tween Inverness an' Teviotdale,
He had few matches.

Then up I gat, an' swoor an aith,
Tho' I should pawn my pleugh an' graith, harness
Or die a cadger pownie's death, pedlar
At some dyke-back, back of a wall
A pint an' gill I 'd gie them baith,
To hear your crack. conversation

But, first an' foremost, I should tell,
Amaist as soon as I could spell,
I to the crambo-jingle fell; rhyming
Tho' rude an' rough—

Yet crooning to a body's sel, humming
Does weel enough.

I am nae poet, in a sense;
But just a rhymer like by chance.
An' hae to learning nae pretence;
Yet, what the matter?
Whene'er my muse does on me glance,
I jingle at her.

Your critic-folk may cock their nose,
And say, 'How can you e'er propose,
You wha ken hardly verse frae prose,
To mak a sang?'
But, by your leaves, my learned foes,
Ye 're maybe wrang.

What 's a your jargon o' your schools—
Your Latin names for horns an' stools?
If honest Nature made you fools,
What sairs your grammars? serves
Ye 'd better taen up spades and shools, shovels
Or knappin-hammers. hammers for breaking stones

A set o' dull, conceited hashes fellows
Confuse their brains in college-classes!
They gang in stirks, and come out asses,
Plain truth to speak;
An' syne they think to climb Parnassus
By dint o' Greek!

Gie me ae spark o' nature's fire,
That 's a' the learning I desire;
Then tho' I drudge thro' dub an' mire pool
At pleugh or cart,
My muse, tho' hamely in attire,
May touch the heart.*

* 'Great Apollo! if thou art in a giving humour, give me—I ask no more—but one stroke of native humour, with a single spark of thy own fire along with it; and send Mercury, with the *rules and compasses*, if he can be spared, with my compliments to—no matter.'—*Tristram Shandy.*

O for a spunk o' Allan's * glee, spark
Or Fergusson's, the bauld an' slee, sly
Or bright Lapraik's, my friend to be,
If I can hit it!
That would be lear eneugh for me, learning
If I could get it.

Now, sir, if ye hae friends enow,
Tho' real friends I b'lieve are few;
Yet, if your catalogue be fu', full
I'se no insist:
But, gif ye want ae friend that 's true, if
I 'm on your list.

I winna blaw about mysel, boast
As ill I like my fauts to tell;
But friends, an' folk that wish me well,
They sometimes roose me; praise
Tho' I maun own, as mony still
As far abuse me.

There 's ae wee faut they whiles lay to me,
I like the lasses—Gude forgie me!
For mony a plack they wheedle frae me coin
At dance or fair;
Maybe some other thing they gie me,
They weel can spare.

But Mauchline Race† or Mauchline Fair,
I should be proud to meet you there:
We 'se gie ae night's discharge to care,
If we forgather; meet
An hae a swap o' rhymin-ware exchange
Wi' ane anither.

The four-gill chap,‡ we 'se gar him clatter, make
An kirsen him wi' reekin water; christen—toddy

* Allan Ramsay.
† This was held on the road adjoining Burns's farm of Mossgiel.
‡ Chappin (a measure for liquor).

Syne we 'll sit down an' tak our whitter,*
To cheer our heart;
An' faith, we 'se be acquainted better
Before we part.

Awa ye selfish, warly race,
Wha think that havins, sense, an' grace, manners
Ev'n love an' friendship should give place
To catch-the-plack! doit
I dinna like to see your face,
Nor hear your crack.

But ye whom social pleasure charms,
Whose hearts the tide of kindness warms,
Who hold your being on the terms,
'Each aid the others,'
Come to my bowl, come to my arms,
My friends, my brothers!

But, to conclude my lang epistle,
As my auld pen 's worn to the gristle,
Twa lines frae you wad gar me fissle, feel lively
Who am most fervent,
While I can either sing or whistle,
Your friend and Servant,
ROBERT BURNESS.

MOSSGIEL, near MACHLINE, *April* 1785.

Lapraik was not slow to appreciate this offer of correspondence. He sent an answer by the hands of his son, who, till lately, lived to relate the circumstances attending its delivery. He found the goodman of Mossgiel in a field engaged in sowing. '"I 'm no sure if I ken the hand," said Burns as he took the letter; but no sooner had he glanced at its contents, than, unconsciously letting go the sheet containing the grain, it was not till he had finished reading that he discovered the loss he had sustained.' †

Without long delay, the poet replied:

* A hearty draught of liquor.

† *Contemporaries of Burns*, p. 26.

SECOND EPISTLE TO J. LAPRAIK.

April 21, 1785.

While new-ca'd kye rowte at the stake *
An' pownies reek in pleugh or braik,† smoke
This hour on e'enin's edge I take,
To own I 'm debtor
To honest-hearted, auld Lapraik,
For his kind letter.

Forjesket sair, with weary legs, Fatigued
Rattlin the corn out-owre the rigs,
Or dealing thro' among the naigs
Their ten-hours' bite,
My awkwart muse sair pleads and begs
I would na write.

The tapetless, ramfeezl'd hizzie, heedless—overspent
She 's saft at best an' something lazy:
Quo' she, 'ye ken we 've been sae busy
This month an' mair,
That trowth, my head is grown right dizzie, in truth
An' something sair.'

Her dowff excuses pat me mad; stupid
'Conscience,' says I, 'ye thowless jade! feeble
I 'll write, an' that a hearty blaud, effusion
This vera night;
Sae dinna ye affront your trade,
But rhyme it right.

'Shall bauld Lapraik, the king o' hearts,
Tho' mankind were a pack o' cartes,
Roose you sae weel for your deserts, praise
In terms sae friendly;
Yet ye 'll neglect to shaw your parts
An' thank him kindly?'

* While the newly calved cows low, tied to stakes for milking.

† Braik, a kind of harrow.—*Burns's Glossary.* More precisely a heavy harrow; a harrow loaded with a log. It is an implement which was at that time much used in Ayrshire and Renfrewshire.

Sae I gat paper in a blink, moment
An' down gaed stumpie in the ink: went the stumpy pen
Quoth I, 'before I sleep a wink,
I vow I 'll close it;
An' if ye winna mak it clink, rhyme
By Jove, I 'll prose it!'

Sae I 've begun to scrawl, but whether
In rhyme, or prose, or baith thegither;
Or some hotch-potch that 's rightly neither,
Let time mak proof;
But I shall scribble down some blether nonsense
Just clean aff-loof. off-hand

My worthy friend, ne'er grudge an' carp,
Tho' fortune use you hard an' sharp;
Come, kittle up your moorland harp rouse
Wi' gleesome touch!
Ne'er mind how Fortune waft and warp;
She 's but a b—tch.

She 's gien me mony a jirt an' fleg, jerk—kick
Sin' I could striddle owre a rig; Since—straddle—ridge
But, by the L—d, tho' I should beg
Wi' lyart pow, gray head
I 'll laugh an' sing, an' shake my leg,
As lang 's I dow! can

Now comes the sax-and-twentieth simmer
I 've seen the bud upo' the timmer,
Still persecuted by the limmer
Frae year to year;
But yet, despite the kittle kimmer, fickle gossip
I, Rob, am here.

Do ye envy the city gent,
Behint a kist to lie an' sklent; chest—deceive
Or purse-proud, big wi' cent. per cent.
An' muckle wame,

In some bit brugh to represent — burgh
A bailie's name?

Or is 't the paughty, feudal thane, — haughty
Wi' ruffl'd sark an' glancing cane, — shirt
Wha thinks himsel nae sheep-shank bane, — no unimportant person
But lordly stalks;
While caps and bonnets aff are taen,
As by he walks?

'O Thou wha gies us each guid gift!
Gie me o' wit an' sense a lift,
Then turn me, if Thou please adrift,
Thro' Scotland wide;
Wi' cits nor lairds I wadna shift,
In a' their pride!'

Were this the charter of our state,
'On pain o' hell be rich an' great,'
Damnation then would be our fate,
Beyond remead;
But, thanks to heaven, that 's no the gate
We learn our creed.

For thus the royal mandate ran,
When first the human race began;
'The social, friendly, honest man,
Whate'er he be—
'Tis *he* fulfils great Nature's plan,
And none but he!'

O mandate glorious and divine!
The followers o' the ragged nine*—
Poor, thoughtless devils—yet may shine
In glorious light;
While sordid sons o' Mammon's line
Are dark as night!

* Variation in Hogg and Motherwell's edition—'Ragged followers o' the nine'—which is more respectful to the Muses.

Tho' here they scrape, an' squeeze, an' growl,
Their worthless nievefu' of a soul handful
May in some future carcase howl,
The forest's fright;
Or in some day-detesting owl
May shun the light.

Then may Lapraik * and Burns arise,
To reach their native, kindred skies,
And sing their pleasures, hopes an' joys,
In some mild sphere;
Still closer knit in friendship's ties,
Each passing year!

We are now brought face to face with the question of the poet's relation to the theological and ecclesiastical controversies of his time and country. A man of Burns's temperament, born in the middle of that century, was almost bound to combine rationalism in theology with a genuine religious sentiment. It is unnecessary to search very particularly in his actual theological environment for the origins of his religion. He had the same bias in reasoning—towards materialism, empiricism, 'common sense'—as most of the leading intellects of the age. But, as his theology was to some extent shaped by the men under whose personal influence he came when a youth, it is essential to explain briefly the 'polemical divinity' which, according to the poet, was setting the country half-mad, and to point out, so far as is possible, the standpoint he took in the controversy, and the sources whence he derived his working theory of the higher life. The hold of Calvinism in the West of Scotland, as elsewhere, was disputed by Arminianism and Socinianism. While the bulk of the people clung to the stern tenets of election, predestination, original sin,

* Although Burns wrote a 'Third Epistle to J. Lapraik,' which appears on p. 191, the subsequent history of the Muirkirk poetaster may here be briefly given. He issued in 1788, through Wilson's Kilmarnock press, an octavo volume of verse, bearing the title *Poems on Several Occasions*, and including Burns's 'Third Epistle.' Its literary merit was small, and it failed to attract public attention. Lapraik, who was compelled to give up his property and the mill of Muirsmill, which he had leased in the neighbourhood, removed to Muirkirk about the time of Burns's death. There he kept an inn, and acted as postmaster. He died in 1807.

and the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, preached as these were by ministers of the party which was fighting against patronage, and for the right of the 'brutes to choose their herds,' an ever-increasing proportion of the Ayrshire pulpits was being filled with men who were in intellect the children of the time, Rationalists of varying degrees of thoroughness, and generally uniting liberalism in conduct to liberalism of thought. The quarrel between the Calvinistic 'Old Lights' (as they were dubbed in those churchyard colloquies where Burns sharpened his argumentative weapons) and the mainly Arminian 'New Lights' was bitter. The fuliginous character of the epithets which the poet, as the champion of the New Lights, flung at his opponents, was matched in the prose of the minister of Auchinleck in his critique of the Socinianism of Dr M'Gill. William Burnes himself, precisian as he was, brought his son under the spell of the New Lights. The poet told Ramsay of Ochtertyre that his father was about to have turned an Antiburgher Seceder when Dr Dalrymple was settled in Ayr. 'He was so much pleased with that gentleman's strain of preaching and benevolent conduct, that he embraced his religious opinions.' So we find that Dr Dalrymple's teaching, so far as it can be gathered from his writings, might have been summarised in Burns's condensed creed—

> The heart benevolent and kind
> The most resembles God.

Moreover, Dalrymple's colleague, Dr M'Gill, in his *Essay on the Death of Jesus Christ*, unquestionably furnished Burns with the material for the most elaborate confession of faith he ever made, that contained in a letter to Clarinda. It can hardly be doubted that during the whole of the Alloway and Mount Oliphant period the Burnes family attended Ayr parish church. Transferred, at the age when the reason is at its greatest heat, to the pastoral care of a Calvinist who, though amiable in character, conjoined with orthodoxy an extreme fondness for ecclesiastical discipline, the poet could not but be revolted both by the doctrine which he heard preached, and by the petty character of the persecution directed by the kirk-session against offenders. He himself, of course, ultimately came under Mr Auld's lash, and it fell lightly enough upon him. But it was probably the treatment which his

friend, Gavin Hamilton, received at the hands of the session, one of whose members was 'Holy Willie,' that fairly roused Burns's resentment against the

> Scoundrels even wi' holy robes,
> But hellish spirit,

under which description, after the manner of satirists, he lumped the whole of the orthodox party in the West. It would be a mistake, however, to try to trace any very close connection between the thought of Burns, so far as it was dogmatic, and the doctrines held by the New Light ministers who took the young farmer by the hand, and eulogised the satires which he wrote for their side. The doctrines preached by Auld, Russell, and their kind, disgusted him; but his polemic against them was purely negative and destructive. He was, doubtless, in complete sympathy with the efforts of the Ayrshire New Lights to procure abolition of the clerical subscription to the Confession of Faith. But he fought for them all through as opponents of orthodoxy, rather than as the advocates of a rival and equally dogmatic theology. In short, Burns is not to be written down Arminian, Socinian, Pelagian, without qualification. The consciousness of the living presence of God in nature was always stronger in him than any theory of redemption. An intellectual sceptic, he was not really interested in theological dogma, though moral and emotional causes preserved in him certain relics of more or less interdependent doctrines.

A distinction must be made between Burns's spontaneous utterances on religion and the poems which he wrote as an advocate. Some years before he struck his first blow at orthodoxy, he spoke as if his view of the universe was chiefly pantheistic. In the year preceding the 'Epistle to Goldie,' we find him treating the Deity as an 'all-good' Power, and praying for not only His forgiveness, but for His help, 'headlong passions to confine;' urging the cultivation of intercourse with 'that Being to whom we owe life,' and the formation of piety and virtue into a habit, with the express object of fitting ourselves to be members of 'that society of the pious and good which reason and revelation lead us to expect beyond the grave.' The mental attitude revealed in these expressions was Burns's through life. He never, probably, had a more

elaborate dogmatic; the variants to which he confessed at various periods were, in the main, deflections from his early faith in immortality. For his right habit of thought about theology we have to search the 'Epistle to William Simson' and the 'Address to the Deil,' rather than the partisan 'Twa Herds,' 'Holy Fair,' and 'Ordination.' He was, in short, a sceptic in relation to systematic theology—the flood of satire he poured upon orthodoxy in the years 1784–6 was purely destructive—only, the irrational conception of the Deity and of His attitude to mankind professed by the Old Lights, coupled with their ultra-Puritanism and the hypocrisy of such men as 'Holy Willie,' made him a fierce controversialist on the side of the New Lights, although it is impossible to say that he did more than find their theology, in the main, consonant with his sentimental (or moral) conviction of the existence of an all-powerful and all-bounteous Deity, desiring to save all men, by the agency of Jesus Christ, for the joys of eternity.*

Burns's first appearance in the field of theologico-ecclesiastical controversy is mainly notable as indicating the extent to which the New Light doctrines had spread among the laity of Ayrshire, and the wrath and alarm with which the 'Whigs'—as the adherents of the Auld Light were nicknamed—regarded their dissemination. In 1780, John Goldie† (*Scottice*, Goudie or Gowdie), a Kilmarnock wine-merchant, who, from being an Anti-burgher, had 'lapsed' into Arminianism, and who was then sixty-three years of

* 'Burns represented the revolt of a virile and imaginative nature against a system of belief and practice which, as he judged, had degenerated into mere bigotry and pharisaism. He developed an unsystematic scepticism, which often shows itself in his serious letters. His strong passions pushed his contempt for hypocritical and external asceticism into a practical disregard of the morality which it caricatured, and which he continued to respect. . . . That Burns, like Carlyle, who at once retained the sentiment and rejected the creed of his race more decidedly than Burns, could sympathise with the higher religious sentiments of his class, is proved by the "Cotter's Saturday Night."'—L. S. (Mr Leslie Stephen) in *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. vii.

† John Goldie was the son of the miller at Craignill, on the water of Cessnock, in the parish of Galston, and was born in 1717. He had a natural bent for mechanics, and while still a young man, removed to Kilmarnock to carry on business as a cabinetmaker. He next became a wine-merchant, but appears to have given up the bulk of his time to scientific (more especially astronomical) investigation and theological speculation, the result of the latter being the publication of his 'Bible' in 1780. In 1808, Goldie published *Conclusive Evidences against Atheism*. He also announced his intention of publishing *A Revise* or *A Reform of the Present History of Astronomy*, but the work never appeared. Goldie, who, according to one of his biographers, 'latterly engaged in mining speculations, and thereby impaired his resources,' died in 1811.

age, published an exposition of his religious views under the title of *Essays on various important Subjects, Moral and Divine, being an attempt to distinguish True from False Religion* (three volumes, 8vo). This work,* which was popularly known as 'Goudie's Bible,' was widely read, and a second edition (in six volumes) appeared in 1785. On the appearance of the new edition, Burns sent a sympathetic greeting to the author.

EPISTLE TO JOHN GOLDIE, IN KILMARNOCK,

AUTHOR OF 'THE GOSPEL RECOVERED.'

August 1785.

O Gowdie, terror o' the whigs,
Dread o' blackcoats and reverend wigs!
Sour Bigotry on his last legs
Girns an' looks back, scowls
Wishing the ten Egyptian plagues
May seize you quick.

Poor gapin, glowrin Superstition!
Wae 's me, she 's in a sad condition:
Fye! bring *Black Jock*, her state physician,
To see her water:
Alas, there 's ground for great suspicion
She 'll ne'er get better.

Enthusiasm 's past redemption,
Gane in a gallopin consumption:
Not a' her quacks, wi' a' their gumption, acuteness
Can ever mend her;
Her feeble pulse gies strong presumption,
She 'll soon surrender.

Auld Orthodoxy lang did grapple,
For every hole to get a stapple; stopper
But now she fetches at the thrapple, catches at the throat
An' fights for breath;
Haste, gie her name up in the chapel,
Near unto death.

* See Appendix, No. II.

It 's you an' *Taylor** are the chief
To blame for a' this black mischief;
But could the L—d's ain folk get leave,
A toom tar barrel — empty
An' twa red peats wad bring relief,
And end the quarrel.

For me, my skill 's but very sma',
An' skill in prose I 've nane ava'; — none at all
But quietlenswise, between us twa, — in a quiet manner
Weel may ye speed!
And tho' they sud you sair misca', — should—revile
Ne'er fash your head. — trouble

E'en swinge the dogs, and thresh them sicker! — severely
The mair they squeel ay chap the thicker; — lay on
And still 'mang hands a hearty bicker — at intervals —draught
O' something stout; — invigorating
It gars an owthor's pulse beat quicker, — makes—author's
And helps his wit.

There 's naething like the honest nappy; — strong drink
Whare 'll ye e'er see men sae happy,
Or women sonsie, saft and sappy, — buxom
'Tween morn and morn,
As them wha like to taste the drappie,
In glass or horn?

I 've seen me daez't upon a time, — dazed
I scarce could wink or see a styme;†
Just ae hauf-mutchkin' does me prime, — half-pint
(Ought less, is little,)
Then back I rattle on the rhyme,
As gleg 's a whittle. — sharp as a knife

The person here called 'Black Jock' was the Rev. John Russell, one of the ministers of Kilmarnock. He was a dark-complexioned,

* Dr John Taylor of Norwich, whose *Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin* was generally accepted as the manual of the New Light rationalism. See Appendix, No. II.

† 'I cannot see a styme'—a popular expression in Scotland, meaning 'I cannot penetrate the darkness in front of me.'

stern-looking man, of great energy in the pulpit, and a powerful defender of the traditional Calvinism. He was born in Morayshire in 1740, and licensed by the Presbytery of Chanonry in 1768. Becoming schoolmaster of Cromarty, by his repute for personal worth and scholarship he drew the scholars from the better class in three counties. The Rev. Donald Sage, in his *Memorabilia Domestica*, describes him as an uncompromising disciplinarian, a strict Sabbatarian, and a preacher of great power. He was 'translated' to the High Church of Kilmarnock in 1774. There was much room for his zeal there, for so long ago as 1764, a New Light clergyman named Lindsay had been introduced into the town, and had of course given a certain amount of currency to what Burns called 'common-sense' views.

Another zealous partisan of the Auld Light—a Mr Alexander Moodie — was minister of the adjacent parish of Riccarton, and it was of course most desirable for two champions of the same cause in such circumstances to remain united. It so happened, however, that they fell out. The country story was that, as they were riding home one evening from Ayr, Moodie amused himself by tickling his friend's horse. The animal performed certain antics along the road, much to the amusement of the passing wayfarers, but greatly to the discomfiture of its rider, who, when he discovered the trick that had been played upon him, could not forgive Moodie. Afterwards, a question of parochial boundaries arose between them. It came before the presbytery for determination. 'There, in the open court,' says Mr Lockhart, 'to which the announcement of the discussion had drawn a multitude of the country-people, Burns among the rest, the reverend divines, hitherto sworn friends and associates, lost all command of temper, and abused each other *coram populo*, with a fiery virulence of personal invective such as has long been banished from all popular assemblies, wherein the laws of courtesy are enforced by those of a certain unwritten code.'

Burns could not resist the temptation to use his wit. He lost no time in producing the following allegory:

THE TWA HERDS; OR, THE HOLY TULYIE.*

AN UNCO MOURNFU' TALE.

Blockheads with reason, wicked wits abhor,
But fool with fool is barbarous civil war.—POPE.

O a' ye pious godly flocks,
Weel fed on pastures orthodox,
Wha now will keep you frae the fox,
Or worrying tykes? dogs
Or wha will tent the waifs an' crocks, stragglers—old ewes
About the dykes?

The twa best herds in a' the wast, west
That e'er ga'e gospel horn a blast
These five an' twenty† simmers past—
Oh, dool to tell! sorrow
Hae had a bitter black out-cast quarrel
Atween themsel.

O, Moodie, man, an' wordy Russell,
How could you raise so vile a bustle;
Ye 'll see how 'new-light' herds will whistle,
An' think it fine!
The L—'s cause ne'er gat sic a twistle, wrench
Sin' I hae min'.

O, sirs! whae'er wad hae expeckit
Your duty ye wad sae negleckit,
Ye wha were ne'er‡ by lairds respeckit
To wear the plaid;
But by the brutes themselves eleckit, elected
To be their guide.

What flock wi' Moodie's flock could rank,
Sae hale and hearty every shank,
Nae poison'd sour Arminian stank pool of standing water
He let them taste;

* Brawl. † Variation—'Fifty.' ‡ Variation—'No.

Frae Calvin's well, ay clear* they drank,—
O, sic a feast!

The thummart, willcat, brock, an' tod, — foumart or polecat—badger—fox
Weel kend his voice thro' a' the wood, — knew
He smell'd their ilka hole an' road,
Baith out and in;
An' weel he lik'd to shed their bluid,
An' sell their skin.

What herd like Russell tell'd his tale;
His voice was heard thro' muir and dale,†
He kenn'd the L—'s sheep, ilka tail,
Owre a' the height;
An' saw‡ gin they were sick or hale, — if—well
At the first sight.

He fine a mangy sheep could scrub,
Or nobly fling§ the gospel club,
And 'new-light' herds could nicely drub,
Or pay their skin;
Could shake them o'er the burning dub, — pool
Or heave them in.

Sic twa—O! do I live to see't,
Sic famous twa should disagree't,
And names like 'villain,' 'hypocrite,'
Ilk ither gi'en,
While 'new-light' herds,‖ wi' laughin spite,
Say neither's lien! — lying

A' ye wha tent the gospel fauld, — look to—fold
There's¶ Duncan deep, an' Peebles** shaul', — shallow

* Variation—'Frae Calvin's fountain-head.'

† There is a literal truth in this line, for a person who sometimes attended Russell's prelections affirmed that, in a favourable state of the atmosphere, his voice, when he was holding forth in the open air at communions, might be heard at a distance of upwards of a mile.

‡ Variation—'Tell.' § Variation—'Swing.' ‖ Variation—'Enemies.'

¶ Dr Robert Duncan, minister of Dundonald. Ordained 1788; died 14th April 1815. Author of a sermon on infidelity.

** Rev. William Peebles, of Newton-upon-Ayr. See notes to the 'Holy Fair' and the 'Kirk's Alarm.'

But chiefly thou, apostle Auld,*
We trust in thee,
That thou wilt work them, hot an' cauld,
Till they agree.†

Consider, sirs, how we 're beset ;
There 's scarce a new herd that we get,
But comes frae 'mang that curséd set
I winna name ;
I hope frae‡ heav'n to see them yet
In fiery flame.

Dalrymple§ has been lang our fae, foe
M'Gill‖ has wrought us meikle wae, much mischief
An' that curs'd rascal ca'd M'Quhae,¶
An' baith the Shaws,**
That aft hae made us black an' blae, blue
Wi' vengefu' paws.

Auld Wodrow †† lang has hatch'd ‡‡ mischief ;
We thought ay, §§ death wad bring relief,

* Rev. William Auld, minister of Mauchline. See p. 184.

† Variation—'To gar them gree.' ‡ Variation—'I trust in.'

§ Rev. William Dalrymple, one of the ministers of Ayr. He was the younger son of James Dalrymple, sheriff-clerk of Ayr, and was born on 29th August 1723. He took license in 1745, and was ordained and inducted to the second charge of Ayr in 1756. He was noted for the purity of his life, the serenity of his temper, and the urbanity of his manners. St Andrews University made him a D.D. in 1779, and he was Moderator of the General Assembly in 1781. He died on 28th January 1814, in his ninety-first year. It was he who baptised Burns.

‖ Rev. William M'Gill, one of the ministers of Ayr, colleague of Dr Dalrymple. See note to the 'Kirk's Alarm.'

¶ Rev. William M'Quhae, minister of St Quivox. Born at Wigtown in 1736, he was educated at Glasgow University, and ordained at St Quivox in 1764. He declined the Moderatorship of the General Assembly in 1806, and died in 1823. He was noted for his business aptitude.

** Dr Andrew Shaw of Craigie, and Dr David Shaw of Coylton. Dr Andrew was a man of excellent abilities, but extremely diffident—a fine speaker, and an accomplished scholar. He was ordained in 1765, and died in 1805. Dr David was a physical prodigy. He was ninety-one years of age before he required an assistant. At that period of life he read without the use of glasses, wrote a neat, small hand, and had not a furrow in his cheek or a wrinkle in his brow. He was Moderator of the General Assembly in 1775. This amiable man died April 26, 1810, in the ninety-second year of his age, and sixty-first of his ministry.

†† There were three brothers of this name, sons of the church historian, and all ministers —one at Eastwood, their father's charge ; the second at Stevenston ; and the third, Dr Peter Wodrow, at Tarbolton. Dr Peter is the person named in the poem. He was born in 1715, ordained at Tarbolton in 1738, and died on 17th April 1793. The assistant and successor mentioned in the verse was M'Math, elsewhere alluded to.

‡‡ Variation—'Wrought.' §§ Variation—'Trusted.'

But he has gotten, to our grief,
Ane to succeed him,
A chield wha 'll soundly buff our beef; rate us
I meikle dread him. greatly

And mony a ane that I could tell,
Wha fain would openly rebel,
Forby turn-coats amang oursel, besides
There 's Smith for ane; *
I doubt he 's but a grey nick quill, soft quill unfit to be used as a pen
An' that ye 'll fin'. find

O! a' ye flocks o'er a' the hills,
By mosses, meadows, moors, an' fells,
Come, join your counsel and your skills
To cowe the lairds, humble
An' get the brutes the power themsels
To chuse their herds.

Then Orthodoxy yet may prance,
An' Learning in a woody dance, halter
An' that fell cur ca'd 'common-sense,'
That bites sae sair,
Be banish'd o'er the sea to France:
Let him bark there.

Then Shaw's an' D'rymple's eloquence,
M'Gill's close nervous excellence,
M'Quhae's pathetic manly sense,
An' guid M'Math,
Wi' Smith, wha thro' the heart can glance,†
May a' pack aff.

The poet tells us that the 'Twa Herds' was the first of his poetic offspring which 'saw the light' of circulation throughout Ayrshire. 'I had,' he says, 'a notion that the piece had some merit; but to

* Rev. George Smith, minister of Galston. He is one of the tent-preachers in the 'Holy Fair.' Here and in the 'Holy Fair' he is claimed as friendly to the New Light party, but he is attacked in the 'Kirk's Alarm.'

† Variation—'Wha through the heart can brawly glance'—thus transferring the compliment to M'Math.

prevent the worst [the possibility of its being condemned as stupid], I gave a copy of it to a friend who was very fond of such things, and told him that I could not guess who could be the author of it, but that I thought it pretty clever. With a certain description of the clergy, as well as laity, it met with a roar of applause.'

The 'Twa Herds' was probably written in April 1785, the era of the letters to Lapraik, and possibly not long after the composition of 'Death and Dr Hornbook.' Patrick Simson, a farmer's son, is credited with having carried a copy of the poem to his home in the village of Ochiltree, on the left bank of the Lugar, about five miles south of Mossgiel. By him it was communicated to his brother William, the parish schoolmaster,* and a rhymer, who, having probably heard the satire attributed to Burns, was immediately prompted to address a versified epistle to him. This was quickly answered by Burns in a poem expressive of his intense love of nature and of country; and to which was appended a clever allegorical description of the heresy which he had adopted.

EPISTLE TO WILLIAM SIMSON,

SCHOOLMASTER, OCHILTREE.

May 1785.

I gat your letter, winsome Willie;
Wi' gratefu' heart I thank you brawlie; heartily
Tho' I maun say 't, I wad be silly,
An' unco vain,
Should I believe, my coaxin billie, fellow
Your flatterin strain.

But I 'se believe ye kindly meant it,
I sud be laith to think ye hinted unwilling
Ironic satire, sidelins sklented directed sideways
On my poor Musie;
Tho' in sic phraisin terms ye 've penn'd it, flattering
I scarce excuse ye.

* William Simson, the elder of the two sons of John Simson, a farmer in Ochiltree, was born in 1758. He was educated for the Church, but became schoolmaster of his native parish, on the post becoming vacant in 1780. Eight years later he became parish schoolmaster of Cumnock, where he died in 1815. His brother, Patrick, who was seven years his junior, succeeded him as parish schoolmaster at Ochiltree, and survived till 1848.

My senses wad be in a creel, — My head would be turned
Should I but dare a hope to speel, — climb
Wi' Allan,* or wi' Gilbertfield,†
The braes o' fame ;
Or Fergusson, the writer-chiel,‡ — lad
A deathless name.

(O Fergusson ! thy glorious parts
Ill suited law's dry, musty arts !
My curse upon your whunstane hearts,
Ye Enbrugh Gentry ! — Edinburgh
The tythe o' what ye waste at cartes
Wad stow'd his pantry !) — would have filled

Yet when a tale comes i' my head,
Or lasses gie my heart a screed, — rent
As whiles they 're like to be my dead, — death
(O sad disease !)
I kittle up my rustic reed ; — waken
It gies me ease.

Auld Coila§ now may fidge|| fu fain,
She 's gotten Poets o' her ain,
Chiels wha their chanters winna hain, — Youths—spare
But tune their lays,
Till echoes a' resound again
Her weel-sung praise.

Nae Poet thought her worth his while,
To set her name in measur'd style ;

* Allan Ramsay, whose 'Gentle Shepherd' appeared in 1725, and who died at the age of seventy-two, the year before Burns was born.

† William Hamilton, born about 1665, tenant of Gilbertfield, Lanarkshire, wrote 'Willie was a Wanton Wag' and 'Epistles to Ramsay,' and abridged Blind Harry's 'Wallace ;' died 1751.

‡ To Robert Fergusson, poet and law-clerk in Edinburgh (*b.* 1750, *d.* 1774), Burns subsequently did ample justice by every means in his power.

§ The Ayrshire district of Kyle, personified under the name of Coila. Burns afterwards assumed Coila as the name of his Muse.

|| 'Fidge' is a restless movement indicative of great pleasure.

She lay like some unkend-of isle
Beside New Holland,
Or where wild-meeting oceans boil
Besouth Magellan. south of

Ramsay an' famous Fergusson
Gied Forth an' Tay a lift aboon ; above
Yarrow an' Tweed, to monie a tune,
Owre Scotland rings,
While Irwin, Lugar, Ayr, an' Doon, Irvine
Nae body sings.

Th' Illissus, Tiber, Thames, an' Seine,
Glide sweet in monie a tunefu' line !
But, Willie, set your fit to mine, foot
An' cock your crest,
We 'll gar our streams an' burnies shine rivulets
Up wi' the best.

We 'll sing auld Coila's plains an' fells,
Her moors red-brown wi' heather bells,
Her banks an' braes, her dens an' dells,
Where glorious Wallace
Aft bure the gree, as story tells, bore the bell from, or conquered
Frae Southron billies. champions

At Wallace' name what Scottish blood
But boils up in a spring-tide flood !
Oft have our fearless fathers strode
By Wallace' side,
Still pressing onward, red-wat shod, ankle-deep in blood
Or glorious dy'd.

O sweet are Coila's haughs an' woods, meadows
When lintwhites chant amang the buds, linnets
And jinkin hares, in amorous whids,* dodging
Their loves enjoy,

* A word expressive of the quick, nimble movements of the hare, which hence is sometimes called a *whiddie* in Scotland.

While thro' the braes the cushat croods — wood-pigeon coos
With wailfu' cry!

Ev'n winter bleak has charms to me
When winds rave thro' the naked tree;
Or frosts on hills of Ochiltree
Are hoary gray;
Or blinding drifts wild-furious flee,
Dark'ning the day!

O Nature! a' thy shews an' forms
To feeling, pensive hearts hae charms!
Whether the Summer kindly warms,
Wi' life an' light,
Or Winter howls, in gusty storms,
The lang, dark night!

The Muse, nae Poet ever fand her, — found
Till by himsel he learn'd to wander,
Adown some trotting burn's meander,
An' no think lang; — find the time tedious
O sweet, to stray an' pensive ponder
A heart-felt sang!

The warly race may drudge an' drive, — worldly
Hog-shouther, jundie, stretch an' strive, — Jostle with the shoulders —hustle
Let me fair Nature's face descrive, — describe from having seen
And I, wi' pleasure,
Shall let the busy, grumbling hive
Bum owre their treasure. — Hum

Fareweel, 'my rhyme-composing brither!'
We 've been owre lang unkenn'd to ither: — unknown
Now let us lay our heads thegither,
In love fraternal:
May Envy wallop in a tether, — dangle at a rope, or hang
Black fiend, infernal!

While Highlandmen hate tolls an' taxes;
While moorlan herds like guid, fat braxies;* — moorland

* Dead sheep—a perquisite of the shepherd.

While Terra Firma, on her axis,
Diurnal turns,
Count on a friend, in faith an' practice,
In Robert Burns.*

POSTSCRIPT.

My memory 's no worth a preen; pin
I had amaist forgotten clean, almost—absolutely
Ye bade me write you what they mean
By this 'new-light,'
'Bout which our herds sae aft hae been so often
Maist like to fight. almost

In days when mankind were but callans boys
At Grammar, Logic, an' sic talents,
They took nae pains their speech to balance,
Or rules to gie,
But spak their thoughts in plain, braid Lallans, Lowland speech
Like you or me.

In thae auld times, they thought the Moon,
Just like a sark, or pair o' shoon, shirt—shoes
Wore by degrees, till her last roon shred
Gaed past their viewing,
An' shortly after she was done
They gat a new one.

This past for certain, undisputed;
It ne'er cam i' their heads to doubt it,
Till chiels gat up an' wad confute it,
An' ca'd it wrang;
An' muckle din there was about it,
Baith loud an' lang.

Some herds, well learn'd upo' the beuk, versed in the Bible
Wad threap auld folk the thing misteuk; insist

* Although, as we have seen, Burns signed his name thus in a letter to Thomas Orr in 1782, this is his first notable deviation from 'Burness,' and was probably taken to suit the necessities of rhyme. On April 14, 1786, he made the final change to 'Burns.'

For 'twas the auld moon turn'd a neuk, corner
An' out o' sight,
An' backlins-comin, to the leuk, backwards—view
She grew mair bright.

This was deny'd, it was affirm'd;
The herds and hissels were alarm'd: flocks
The rev'rend gray-beards rav'd an' storm'd,
That beardless laddies
Should think they better were inform'd
Than their auld daddies. fathers

Frae less to mair it gaed to sticks; cudgels
Frae words an' aiths to clours an' nicks; blows—cuts
An' monie a fallow gat his licks, got a beating
Wi' hearty crunt; knock
An' some, to learn them for their tricks,
Were hang'd an' brunt. burnt

This game was play'd in monie lands,
An' 'auld-light' caddies bure sic hands, fellows
That faith, the youngsters took the sands
Wi' nimble shanks,
Till Lairds forbad, by strict commands,
Sic bluidy pranks.

But 'new-light' herds gat sic a cowe, humbling
Folk thought them ruined stick-an-stowe, completely
Till now amaist on ev'ry knowe, almost—knoll
Ye 'll find ane plac'd;
An' some, their 'new-light' fair avow,
Just quite barefac'd.

Nae doubt the 'auld-light' flocks are bleatin;
Their zealous herds are vex'd an' sweatin;
Mysel, I 've even seen them greetin in tears
Wi' girnin spite, scowling
To hear the Moon sae sadly lie'd on
By word an' write.

But shortly they will cowe the louns ! rascals
Some 'auld-light' herds in neebor touns
Are mind't, in things they ca' balloons,
To tak a flight,
An' stay ae month amang the Moons
An' see them right.

Guid observation they will gie them ;
An' when the auld Moon 's gaun to lea'e them,
The hindmost shaird, they 'll fetch it wi' them, fragment
Just i' their pouch,
An' when the 'new-light' billies see them,
I think they 'll crouch !

Sae, ye observe that a' this clatter
Is naething but a 'moonshine matter ;'
But tho' dull prose-folk Latin splatter
In logic tulzie, contention
I hope, we Bardies ken some better
Than mind sic brulzie. broil

Professor Josiah Walker, a personal friend and a biographer of Burns, has related an anecdote regarding this period of the poet's life. After noting that, while still unknown as a poet, he numbered several clergymen among his acquaintance, Walker says : 'One of these communicated to me a circumstance which conveys more forcibly than many words an idea of the impression made upon his mind by the powers of the poet. This gentleman, after entering on the clerical profession, had repeatedly met Burns in company, when the acuteness and originality displayed by the latter, the depth of his discernment, the force of his expressions, and the authoritative energy of his understanding, had created in the former a sense of his power, of the extent of which he was unconscious till revealed to him by accident. The second time that he appeared in the pulpit, he came with an assured and tranquil mind, and though a few persons of education were present, he advanced some length in the service with his confidence and self-possession unimpaired ; but when he observed Burns, who was of a different parish, unexpectedly enter the

church, he was instantly affected with a tremor and embarrassment which suddenly apprised him of the impression his mind, unknown to itself, had previously received. He now discovered that in their former interviews he had been gradually and imperceptibly measuring the strength of that intellectual giant, before whom he was now to exhibit his own. When it is added that the person thus affected had good abilities, improved by a careful education, and that he had also more than the ordinary portion of constitutional firmness, we may be able to conceive the degree of respect which was inspired by the talents of the unlettered ploughman before he had been advanced to precedency by any public honours.'

The clergyman here mentioned has been proved to be the Rev. Dr Niven, afterwards minister of Dunkeld, but then only a young licentiate of divinity, acting as tutor in the family of Mr Hamilton of Sundrum, in the neighbouring parish of Coylton. An anecdote is added on the report of Dr Niven's son. His father was sent to invite Burns to join a party of friends at a certain hour. He found the poet threshing. 'The message being delivered, Burns said he could not get through his threshing in time, but added: "If you will take that flail and help me, I may be able to go." The doctor, a tall, powerful man, instantly threw off his coat, seized the flail, and threshed with good-will. The threshing was finished in time, and Burns went to the party.'

It may be assumed, from the language of Burns himself, that the moment it was determined, by the roar of applause, that the 'Twa Herds' was 'clever,' he no longer attempted to conceal the authorship. It obtained for him the friendship of several of the neighbouring moderate clergy, such as the Shaws, M'Quhae, and, in particular, the young preacher, M'Math, who had lately come to Tarbolton to act as assistant to the minister of that parish. In Burns's own parish of Mauchline, the minister, Mr Auld, or, as the poet irreverently called him, 'Daddy Auld,' was a rigid Whig.* From him the poet could only look for reprobation,

* The Rev. William Auld was a younger son of the Laird of Ellanton, in the parish of Symington. He was born in 1709, took his M.A. degree at Edinburgh in 1738, and studied theology at Glasgow and Leyden. After acting for some time as tutor in the family of the laird of Schawfield, he was licensed by the presbytery of Hamilton in 1739, and ordained at Mauchline in 1742. Strict disciplinarian as the church records show him to have been, he was a kindly, courteous man. Notwithstanding the provocation he received from the

if not hostility. Amongst the laity of his neighbourhood, he had no friend more sympathetic than his own landlord, Gavin Hamilton, the Mauchline 'writer'—a generous-hearted, upright man, whose character as a 'religious professor' did not, however, come up to the standard of Mr Auld. Hamilton had some time before been in trouble with the parish session, on account of defects in his religious practice. In the Scottish Presbyterian Church, it is the kirk-session, consisting of the minister and his staff of lay elders, that possesses and exercises the right of discipline over members of the flock: if they see reason to disapprove the life or opinions of any member of the church, they can withhold from him permission to take the sacrament, and thus expose him to public obloquy. In August 1784, just before the annual celebration of the communion, the session of Mauchline resolved that certain parishioners should be remonstrated with on the score of their habitual neglect of public ordinances. Mr Hamilton, learning what had taken place, and believing that he himself was the principal person aimed at, sent the session a letter, plainly telling them that they must be conscious that they proceeded upon no just grounds of offence against him, but purely on 'private pique and ill-nature.' They fired at this, but without being able immediately to vindicate their dignity, for, in January, Mr Hamilton was successful in an appeal for the protection of the superior court—the presbytery of Ayr.

They, however, cited Mr Hamilton on the following charges: that he still neglects to attend church, having been absent two Sundays in the past, and three in the present month; that on the third Sunday of the present month, he set out on a journey to Carrick, although admonished against so doing by the minister; that he habitually, if not totally, neglects the worship of God in

poet, he inflicted on Burns something less than the full penalty for his offence, and his exhortation to Burns and other delinquents, which has been preserved in MS., is not harsh in its terms. He was a zealous friend of the poor, and levied parochial fees diligently for their behoof. Mr Auld did something for the decency of worship in his parish, the 'Holy Fair' notwithstanding. He made the heritors fence the churchyard, and stopped the proclamation of roups at the church door. He also put down cock-fighting. But he was very opinionative and self-willed. He discontinued a week-day service which his predecessor had held, till compelled by presbytery to resume it. He quarrelled with his peaceful neighbour, Dr Wodrow, of Tarbolton, and pursued the matter to the General Assembly; and in 1767 he was reproved by the presbytery for evading the duty of examining witnesses in a case of scandal against a ministerial brother. Mr Auld never aspired to be a church leader. He died on 12th December 1791. His popularity is attested by the fact that the number of his communicants rose from 578 in the year 1750 to 1400 in 1768.

his family; and, finally, that he had written an abusive letter to the session. It throws a curious light on the practices of those days, that the session enter the names of five former and three present servants of Mr Hamilton who may be cited to give evidence on some of these charges. He produced an order from the presbytery enjoining the erasure of the session minutes of which he had complained. The session carried the affair by appeal before the next higher court—the synod. The case need not be followed through all its windings; but it terminated in July 1785, when the session granted Mr Hamilton a certificate to the effect that he was free from all ground of church censure; so that he was substantially the victor. At the final hearing of the case before the presbytery, Mr Hamilton's agent, Mr Robert Aiken, writer in Ayr, exercised the oratorical talents which had gained him a local celebrity, in exposing the secret motives of the prosecution, and in particular of one of the elders, named William Fisher. Burns had looked on with feelings keenly excited in favour of Mr Hamilton, whom he regarded as a noble-hearted man wronged by a set of malicious bigots; and he wrote a satire, nominally aimed at that particular elder (who in the district bore the nickname of 'Holy Willie'), but which was in reality a burlesque of the extreme doctrinal views of the Auld Light party:

HOLY WILLIE'S PRAYER.*

And Send the Godly in a pet to pray.—POPE.

O Thou that in the heavens does dwell!
Wha, as it pleases best Thysel,
Sends ane to heaven and ten to h—ll,
A' for Thy glory;
And no for ony guid or ill
They 've done before Thee!

* Burns, on subsequently making a copy of 'Holy Willie's Prayer' for his friend Glenriddel, prefixed to it the following 'argument,' which should be considered merely as expressing the view taken of Fisher by his New Light opponents in or near Mauchline: 'Holy Willie was a rather oldish bachelor elder, in the parish of Mauchline, and much and justly famed for that polemical chattering which ends in rippling orthodoxy, and for that spiritualized bawdry which refines to liquorish devotion. In a sessional process with a gentleman in Mauchline—a Mr Gavin Hamilton—*Holy Willie* and his priest, Father Auld, after full hearing in the presbytery of Ayr, came off but second best; owing partly to the oratorical powers of Mr Robert Aiken, Mr Hamilton's counsel, but chiefly to Mr Hamilton's being one of the most irreproachable and truly respectable characters in the county. On losing his process, the Muse overheard him [Holy Willie] at his devotions, as follows.'

I bless and praise Thy matchless might,
When thousands Thou hast left in night,
That I am here before Thy sight,
For gifts and grace
A burning and a shining light,
To a' this place.

What was I, or my generation,
That I should get such exaltation?
I, wha deserv'd most just damnation
For broken laws,
Sax thousand years ere my creation
Thro' Adam's cause.

When frae my mither's womb I fell,
Thou might hae plungèd me in hell,
To gnash my gums, to weep and wail,
In burnin lakes,
Where damnèd devils roar and yell,
Chain'd to their stakes.

Yet I am here, a chosen sample,
To show Thy grace is great and ample;
I 'm here, a pillar o' Thy temple,
Strong as a rock;
A guide, a ruler, and example
To a' Thy flock.

O L—d, Thou kens what zeal I bear,
When drinkers drink, an' swearers swear,
An' singin' there, an' dancin' here,
Wi' great and sma';
For I am keepit by Thy fear,
Free frae them a'.

But yet, O L—d, confess I must,
At times I 'm fash'd wi' fleshly lust: troubled
And sometimes too in warldly trust
Vile Self gets in:
But Thou remembers we are dust,
Defil'd wi' sin.

O L—d—yestreen—Thou kens—wi Meg—
Thy pardon I sincerely beg:
O, may 't ne'er be a livin plague,
To my dishonor!
And I 'll ne'er lift a lawless leg
Again upon her!

Besides, I further maun avow,
Wi' Leezie's lass—three times—I trow—
But L—d, that Friday I was fou drunk
When I cam near her;
Or else, Thou kens, Thy servant true
Wad never steer her. meddle with

Maybe Thou lets this fleshly thorn
Buffet Thy servant e'en and morn
Lest he owre proud and high should turn
That he 's sae gifted:
If sae, Thy hand maun e'en be borne
Until Thou lift it.

L—d bless Thy chosen in this place,
For here Thou hast a chosen race;
But G—d confound their stubborn face,
And blast their name,
Wha bring their rulers to disgrace
And public shame.

L—d mind Gaun Hamilton's deserts;
He drinks, and swears, and plays at cartes, cards
Yet has sae mony takin arts popular
Wi' Great and Sma',
Frae G—d's ain Priest the people's hearts
He steals awa.

And when we chasten'd him therefore
Thou kens how he bred sic a splore, disturbance
And set the warld in a roar
O' laughin at us:
Curse Thou his basket and his store
Kail and potatoes.

L—d hear my earnest cry and pray'r
Against that Presbytry of Ayr!
Thy strong right hand, L—d make it bare
Upo' their heads!
L—d visit them and dinna spare,
For their misdeeds!

O L—d, my G—d, that glib-tongu'd Aiken,
My very heart and flesh are quakin,
To think how I sat, sweatin, shakin,
And —— wi' dread,
While Auld, wi' hingin lip gaed sneakin sneaky
And hid his head.*

L—d in Thy day o' vengeance try him!
L—d visit them wha did employ him!
And pass not in Thy mercy by them,
Nor hear their prayer,
But for Thy people's sake destroy them,
And dinna spare!

But L—d remember me and mine
Wi' mercies temporal and divine;
That I for grace and gear may shine,
Excell'd by nane!
And a' the glory shall be Thine,
AMEN! AMEN!

EPITAPH ON HOLY WILLIE.

Here Holy Willie's sair worn clay
Taks up its last abode;
His saul has ta'en some other way,
I fear, the left-hand road.

Stop! there he is as sure 's a gun,
Poor, silly body, see him;
Nae wonder he 's as black 's the grun,
Observe wha 's standing wi' him.

* Variation—
'To think how we stood, sweatin, shakin,
An' —— wi' dread,
While he, wi' hingin' lip an' snakin,
Held up his head.'

Your brunstane devilship, I see — brimstone
Has got him there before ye;
But haud your nine-tail cat a wee, — hold— for a short time
Till ance you 've heard my story.

Your pity I will not implore,
For pity ye have nane;
Justice, alas! has gi'en him o'er,
And mercy's day is gane.

But hear me, Sir, deil as ye are,
Look something to your credit;
A coof like him wou'd stain your name, — fool
If it were kent ye did it.

The strength of satire here employed needs no comment. That Burns firmly believed Fisher to have been a sanctimonious hypocrite and drunkard, and even worse, is quite evident, for in the 'Kirk's Alarm,' written in 1789, he preferred a definite charge of swindling the poor against him in these words:

Holy Will, Holy Will,
There was wit i' your skull,
When ye pilfer'd the alms o' the poor.

It is but fair to Fisher to say that no charge of embezzlement appears to have been formally made against him in any court. But on October 14, 1790, he was solemnly rebuked by Mr Auld for drunkenness, and thus warned, 'Be on your guard in all time coming against this bewitching sin, shun bad company, avoid taverns as much as possible, and abhor the character of a tippler.' It has been pointed out, however, that in spite of this rebuke, Fisher continued an elder, not only till Mr Auld's death, but so long as he remained in the parish of Mauchline—he quitted it some time near the end of the century to occupy the farm of Tongue-in-Auchterless, in the parish of Sorn—and that 'at a special meeting of session, held in 1798, for the admission of young communicants, he was called upon by the minister to engage with them in the exercise of prayer.' *

* It is commonly averred that William Fisher perished in a ditch, into which he had fallen when coming home from a debauch; and there died not long ago in Mauchline a woman

The harvest of 1785 was delayed by bad weather. On Mossgiel half the crop was lost—a circumstance seriously affecting the prospects of Burns and his brother. In two epistles of this period —one to his brother poet Lapraik, the other to a clerical friend— the bard alludes to the bad season, as well as to the ecclesiastical bickerings then going on:

THIRD EPISTLE TO J. LAPRAIK.*

Sept. 13, 1785.

Guid speed an' furder to you, Johny,
Guid health, hale han's, an' weather bony;
Now when ye 're nickin down fu' cany — cutting
The staff o' bread, — bread, the 'staff of life'
May ye ne'er want a stoup o' brany — cup
To clear your head.

May Boreas never thresh your rigs,
Nor kick your rickles aff their legs, — ricks, small stacks
Sendin' the stuff o'er muirs an' haggs — corn—mosses
Like drivin' wrack;
But may the tapmast grain that wags
Come to the sack.

I 'm bizzie too, an' skelpin' at it, — busy—striking
But bitter, daudin showers hae wat it, — pelting—wetted
Sae my auld stumpie pen I gat it
Wi' muckle wark,
An' took my jocteleg an' whatt it, — knife—whetted, sharpened
Like ony clark.

It 's now twa month that I 'm your debtor,
For your braw, nameless, dateless letter,
Abusin' me for harsh ill nature
On holy men,

who averred that she had seen him lying drunk at the roadside. The facts, so far as they can now be ascertained, appear to be these: Fisher, then seventy-two years of age, had a business meeting with his landlord in Mauchline on the 13th of February 1809. In the evening he started, in a snow-storm, to walk to his farm, which was four miles distant. Next morning his body was found, about half-way between the two places, in a ditch.

* First published by Cromek in his *Reliques* (1808).

While deil a hair yoursel ye 're better,
But mair profane.

But let the kirk-folk ring their bells,
Let 's sing about our noble sel's;
We 'll cry nae jads frae heathen hills — goddesses
To help, or roose us, — praise
But browster wives an' whisky stills, — women who brew or sell malt liquors
They are the muses.

Your friendship, sir, I winna quat it, — give it up
An' if ye mak objections at it,
Then han' in nieve some day we 'll knot it, — fist
An' witness take,
An' when wi' Usquabae we 've wat it, — whisky
It winna break.

But if the beast and branks be spar'd — wooden curbs
Till kye be gaun without the herd, — cows
An' a' the vittel in the yard, — victual, corn
An' theekit right, — thatched
I mean your ingle-side to guard — fireside
Ae winter night.

Then muse-inspirin' aqua-vitæ
Shall make us baith sae blythe an' witty,
Till ye forget ye 're auld an' gatty, — big-bellied
An' be as canty — merry
As ye were nine year less than thretty,
Sweet ane an' twenty!

But stooks are cowpet wi' the blast, — overturned
An' now the sinn keeks in the west, — sun—peeps
Then I maun rin amang the rest,
An' quat my chanter; — leave off rhyming
Sae I subscribe mysel in haste,
Yours, Rab the Ranter.*

* A sobriquet borrowed from the old Scots song 'Maggy Lauder.'

TO THE REV. JOHN M'MATH,*

INCLOSING A COPY OF 'HOLY WILLIE'S PRAYER,' WHICH HE HAD REQUESTED.

Sept. 17, 1785.

While at the stook the shearers cow'r — shock—reapers
To shun the bitter blaudin' show'r, — beating
Or in gulravage rinnin scow'r — hurried scamper—escape
To pass the time,
To you I dedicate the hour
In idle rhyme.

My musie, tir'd wi' mony a sonnet
On gown, an' ban', an' douse black bonnet,† — grave
Is grown right eerie now she 's done it, — frightened
Lest they shou'd blame her,
An' rouse their holy thunder on it
And anathem her. — curse

I own 'twas rash, an' rather hardy,
That I, a simple, countra bardie,
Shou'd meddle wi' a pack sae sturdy,
Wha, if they ken me,
Can easy, wi' a single wordie,
Louse h—ll upon me. — Let loose

But I gae mad at their grimaces,
Their sighin, cantin, grace-prood faces,
Their three-mile prayers, an' hauf-mile graces,
Their raxin conscience, — accommodating
Whase greed, revenge, an' pride disgraces
Waur nor their nonsense. — worse

* At that time assistant and successor to the Rev. Peter Wodrow, minister of Tarbolton. He was licensed in 1779, and ordained at Tarbolton on 16th May 1789. He was an excellent preacher, and, like Wodrow, a moderate. He enjoyed the friendship of the Montgomeries of Coilsfield, and of Burns, but unhappily fell into low spirits, in consequence of his dependent situation, and became dissipated. He resigned his charge in 1791, and died in obscurity at Rossul, in the Isle of Mull, December 1825.

† 'Gown an' ban'' probably means minister, and 'black bonnet,' elder.

There 's Gau'n,* misca'd waur than a beast, reviled
Wha has mair honor in his breast
Than mony scores as guid 's the priest
Wha sae abus'd him.
An' may a bard no crack his jest
What way they 've used him ?

See him, the poor man's friend in need,
The gentleman in word an' deed,
An' shall his fame an' honor bleed
By worthless skellums, wretches
An' not a muse erect her head
To cowe the blellums ? bullies

O Pope, had I thy satire's darts
To gie the rascals their deserts,
I 'd rip their rotten, hollow hearts,
An' tell aloud
Their jugglin' hocus-pocus arts
To cheat the crowd.

God knows, I 'm no the thing I shou'd be,
Nor am I even the thing I cou'd be,
But twenty times, I rather wou'd be
An atheist clean,
Than under gospel colors hid be
Just for a screen.

An honest man may like a glass,
An honest man may like a lass,
But mean revenge, an' malice fause false
He 'll still disdain,
An' then cry zeal for gospel laws,
Like some we ken.

They take religion in their mouth ;
They talk o' mercy, grace an' truth,

* Gavin Hamilton.

For what? to gie their malice skouth scope
On some puir wight,
An' hunt him down, o'er right an' ruth,
To ruin streight. straight

All hail, religion! maid divine!
Pardon a muse sae mean as mine,
Who in her rough imperfect line
Thus daurs to name thee; dares
To stigmatize false friends of thine
Can ne'er defame thee.

Tho' blotch't an' foul wi' mony a stain,
An' far unworthy of thy train,
With trembling voice I tune my strain
To join with those
Who boldly dare thy cause maintain
In spite of foes:

In spite o' crowds, in spite o' mobs,
In spite of undermining jobs,
In spite o' dark banditti stabs
At worth an' merit,
By scoundrels, even wi' holy robes,
But hellish spirit.

O Ayr, my dear, my native ground,
Within thy presbyterial bound
A candid lib'ral band is found
Of public teachers,
As men, as Christians too, renown'd,
An' manly preachers.

Sir, in that circle you are nam'd;
Sir, in that circle you are fam'd;
An' some, by whom your doctrine 's blam'd
(Which gies you honor)
Even, Sir, by them your heart 's esteem'd,
An' winning manner.

Pardon this freedom I have ta'en,
An' if impertinent I 've been,
Impute it not, good Sir, in ane
Whase heart ne'er wrang'd ye,
But to his utmost would befriend
Ought that belang'd ye.

The meagre harvest of '85 was gathered, and Robert and Gilbert Burns must have begun to entertain serious misgivings as to their future. Robert knew by this time that he could write so as to secure the approbation of other than a country audience. Gilbert tells us that, in the course of a Sunday-walk, the poet repeated to him the 'Cotter's Saturday Night,' and he was *electrified* by it. 'The fifth, sixth, and eighteenth stanzas thrilled with ecstasy through his soul.' It can hardly be supposed that Burns could witness the remarkable effect of his compositions on the mind and feelings of so intelligent a man as he knew his brother to be, and yet be conscious of no fluttering hope that he might yet be a successful poet, and even, by means of poetry, mend in some degree fortunes on which all ordinary exertions seemed to be thrown away. It may be regarded, therefore, as more than probable that before the end of this year the notion of publishing presented itself to Burns, and that he began seriously to set about the composition of poems not strictly occasional, as his work had for the most part been up to this time. 'Holding the plough,' we are told by Gilbert, 'was a favourite situation with Robert for poetic composition, and some of his best verses were produced while he was at that exercise.' The ploughing for winter-wheat began as a rule in November, and Burns had then, of course, an opportunity of securing his favourite inspiration. That he took due advantage of it, or was, at all events, very soon after engaged in composing some of his most important poems, appears from a letter which he addressed, in February 1786, to his young friend John Richmond. It is tolerably safe, therefore, to set down as the product of the later autumn and early winter these poems: 'To a Mouse,' 'Halloween,' 'Man was made to Mourn,' 'The Cotter's Saturday Night,' 'Address to the Deil,' 'The Jolly Beggars,' 'To James Smith,' 'The Vision,' 'The Author's Earnest Cry and Prayer,' 'The Twa Dogs,' 'The Ordination,' and 'Scotch

Drink,' the works which formed the main foundation of the poet's future fame. The literary industry betokened by the number and volume of these writings would be remarkable in any man; it was unprecedented in Burns, whose previous verses had usually been prompted by the passion of the hour. But now he had a definite end in view for his writings. That such was indeed the case is positively affirmed by his confidant, Gilbert, who expressly says that '"The Twa Dogs" was composed after the resolution of publishing was nearly taken.' 'The Twa Dogs,' we shall see, was finished before February 17, 1786, a date considerably anterior to that at which the resolution to publish is usually said to have been formed.

There are three farms named Mossgiel,* East, West, and South, known in Burns's day as 'Near,' 'Far,' and 'Nether Mossgiel.' It was Near or East Mossgiel that was occupied by Burns, 'Nether' or South being on the slope of the Ayr below it, and West or 'Far' on the Irvine. Although the elevated situation of Mossgiel was almost fatal to the successful farming of its soil, it was not unfitted for the awakening of imaginative enthusiasm—a circumstance which ought not to be forgotten in considering the extraordinary poetic activity of Burns at this period of his life. The farm looks down from the front into the richly wooded valley of the Ayr, and beyond it to the sea and the hills of Arran,† while

* 'Mossgiel' is said to mean 'waste or fallow ridge.' 'Such is the derivation of the name suggested to me by the Rev. Alex. M'Gregor, of Inverness, a superior Gaelic scholar; from the Celtic *Màs-geal*, pronounced *Mas-gheul*, derived from *Màs*, the thigh or flank, applied also to a ridge, and *geal*, white, waste, bleak, fallow. Land is said to be *geal* or *bàn*, or white, when not fully cultivated, with a bare, bleak appearance.'—*Burns at Mossgiel*, by Mr William Jolly, H.M. Inspector of Schools. This little volume, published in 1881, contains recollections and anecdotes of the poet, by William Patrick, who was herd-boy at Mossgiel from 1784, when the Burnes family arrived from Lochlea, till 1788, when the poet settled in Ellisland.

† '"There!" said a stripling, pointing with much pride,
Towards a low roof with green trees half concealed,
"Is Mossgiel Farm, and that 's the very field
Where Burns ploughed up the Daisy." Far and wide
A plain below stretched seaward, while, descried
Above sea-clouds, the Peaks of Arran rose;
And, by that simple notice, the repose
Of earth, sky, sea, and air was vivified.
Beneath "the random *bield* of clod or stone"
Myriads of daisies have shone forth in flower
Near the lark's nest, and in their natural hour
Have passed away; less happy than the One
That, by one unwilling ploughshare, died to prove
The tender charm of poetry and love.'—WORDSWORTH.

to the left are Ballochmyle and the uplands of Muirkirk and Cumnock. From behind the house a glimpse may be had of the valley of the Irvine, while to the east you look across the Cessnock to Galston Muirs, over which one memorable summer morning the rising sun

Wi' glorious light was glintin'.

The farmhouse, which was almost entirely rebuilt about the close of 1859, consisted mainly of a kitchen and parlour, both containing several beds. Almost the only other apartment in the house was a kind of garret-closet, accessible by a narrow wooden trap-stair ascending from the lobby behind the door. This garret seems to have been divided into three small rooms, the two nearest to Mauchline being used as bedrooms, and the third as a lumber closet reached from the kitchen. The middle room was lighted by a window of four panes placed in the sloping roof, and according to Mrs Begg, contained a small curtainless bed, in which the two brothers slept. Under the window the poet had a little deal-table with a drawer. It was at this table that he transcribed the verses which for the most part he had composed in the fields, and his youngest sister often stole up, after he had gone out to his afternoon labour, to search the drawer for the verses he had written.

TO A MOUSE,

ON TURNING HER UP IN HER NEST, WITH THE PLOUGH, NOVEMBER 1785.

Wee, sleekit, cowrin, tim'rous beastie, — sleek
O, what a panic 's in thy breastie!
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,
Wi' bickering brattle! — hasty scamper
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee, — loth
Wi' murd'ring pattle! *

I 'm truly sorry Man's dominion
Has broken Nature's social union,

* The stick used to remove clay sticking to the ploughshare.

An' justifies that ill opinion,
Which makes thee startle,
At me, thy poor, earth-born companion,
An' fellow-mortal!

I doubt na, whyles, but thou may thieve; sometimes
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!
A daimen icker in a thrave*
'S a sma' request:
I'll get a blessin wi' the lave, remainder
And never miss 't!

Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin!
Its silly wa's the win's are strewin!
An' naething, now, to big a new ane, erect
O' foggage green! moss
An' bleak December's winds ensuin,
Baith snell and keen! biting

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste,
An' weary Winter comin fast,
An' cozie here, beneath the blast, comfortable
Thou thought to dwell,
Till crash! the cruel coulter past
Out thro' thy cell.

That wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble, stubble
Has cost thee mony a weary nibble!
Now thou 's turn'd out, for a' thy trouble,
But house or hald, Without—holding
To thole the Winter's sleety dribble, endure—drizzle
An' cranreuch cauld! hoar-frost

But Mousie, thou art no thy lane, not alone
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best-laid schemes o' Mice an' Men
Gang aft a-gley, go often wrong
An' lea'e us nought but grief and pain, leave
For promis'd joy.

* An occasional ear of corn in twenty-four sheaves.

Still thou are blest, compar'd wi' me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But, Och! I backward cast my e'e,
On prospects drear!
An' forward, tho' I canna see,
I guess an' fear!

We have the testimony of Gilbert Burns that this poem was composed while the author was following the plough. Burns ploughed with four horses, and therefore required an assistant called a *gaudsman*, to drive the horses, his own duty being to hold and guide the plough. John Blane, who had acted as gaudsman to Burns, and who lived for sixty years afterwards, had a distinct recollection of the turning-up of the mouse. Inspired by something akin to what Sydney Smith has termed 'the simious schoolboy delight of giving pain to others,' the lad ran after the creature to kill it, but was checked and recalled by his master, who, he observed, thereafter became thoughtful and abstracted. Burns, who treated his servants as if they were fellow-labourers, soon after read the poem to Blane.

HALLOWEEN.*

The following poem will, by many readers, be well enough understood; but for the sake of those who are unacquainted with the manners and traditions of the country where the scene is cast, notes are added, to give some account of the principal charms and spells of that night, so big with prophecy to the peasantry in the west of Scotland. The passion of prying into futurity makes a striking part of the history of human nature in its rude state, in all ages and nations; and it may be some entertainment to a philosophic mind, if any such honour the author with a perusal, to see the remains of it, among the more unenlightened in our own.

Yes! let the Rich deride, the Proud disdain,
The simple pleasures of the lowly train;
To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
One native charm, than all the gloss of art.—GOLDSMITH.

* [All Hallow Eve, or the eve of All Saints' Day] is thought to be a night when witches, devils, and other mischief-making beings are all abroad on their baneful, midnight errands; particularly those aërial people, the fairies, are said, on that night, to hold a grand anniversary.—*B.*

Upon that night, when Fairies light
On Cassilis Downans * dance,
Or owre the lays, in splendid blaze, fields
On sprightly coursers prance;
Or for Colean the route is ta'en,
Beneath the moon's pale beams;
There, up the Cove,† to stray an' rove
Amang the rocks an' streams
To sport that night.‡

Amang the bony, winding banks,
Where Doon rins, wimplin, clear, meandering
Where Bruce § ance rul'd the martial ranks,
An' shook his Carrick spear,
Some merry, friendly, country-folks
Together did convene,
To burn their nits, an' pou their stocks, nuts—pull
An' haud their Halloween hold
Fu' blythe that night.

The lasses feat, an' cleanly neat, trim
Mair braw than when they 're fine; looking to greater advantage
Their faces blythe, fu' sweetly kythe, appear
Hearts leal, an' warm, an' kin': loyal—kind
The lads sae trig, wi' wooer-babs spruce—love-knots
Weel-knotted on their garten; garters
Some unco blate, an' some wi' gabs, very bashful—insinuating talk
Gar lasses' hearts gang startin
Whyles fast at night.

* Certain little, romantic, rocky, green hills, in the neighbourhood of the ancient seat of the Earls of Cassilis.—*B.*

† A noted cavern near Colean [Culzean] House, called the Cove of Colean; which, as well as Cassilis Downans, is famed, in country story, for being a favourite haunt of the fairies.—*B.*

‡ The use of 'that night,' winding up every stanza in 'Halloween,' may be compared with the similar use of 'that day' in the old Scots poem of 'Christ's Kirk on the Green,' commonly, but on imperfect evidence, attributed to James I. of Scotland, in which every verse has for last line 'At Christ's Kirk on the Green that day.'

§ The famous family of that name, the ancestors of ROBERT, the great Deliverer of his country, were Earls of Carrick.—*B.*

Then, first an' foremost, thro' the kail, cabbage-plot
Their 'stocks' * maun a' be sought ance;
They steek their e'en, an' graip an' wale close—grope—choose
For muckle anes and straught anes. large—straight
Poor hav'rel Will fell aff the drift, half-witted
An' wander'd thro' the 'bow-kail,'
An' pow't, for want o' better shift, pulled
A runt was like a sow-tail,
Sae bow't that night. crooked

Then, straught or crooked, yird or nane,
They roar an' cry a' throu'ther;
The vera wee-things, todlin, rin tottering
Wi' stocks out-owre their shouther;
An' gif the custoc 's sweet or sour,
Wi' joctelegs they taste them; knives
Syne coziely, aboon the door, Then comfortably
Wi' cannie care, they 've plac'd them gentle
To lie that night.

The lasses staw frae 'mang them a', stole out
To pou their stalks o' corn; †
But Rab slips out, an' jinks about, dodges
Behint the muckle thorn:
He grippet Nellie hard an' fast;
Loud skirl'd a' the lasses; screamed
But her tap-pickle maist was lost, almost
When kiutlin in the 'Fause-house' ‡ embracing
Wi' him that night.

* The first ceremony of Halloween is, pulling each a 'stock,' or plant of kail. They must go out, hand in hand, with eyes shut, and pull the first they meet with: its being big or little, straight or crooked, is prophetic of the size and shape of the grand object of all their spells—the husband or wife. If any 'yird,' or earth, stick to the root, that is 'tocher,' or fortune; and the taste of the 'custoc,' that is, the heart of the stem, is indicative of the natural temper and disposition. Lastly, the stems, or, to give them their proper appellation, the 'runts,' are placed somewhere above the head of the door; and the Christian names of people whom chance brings into the house are, according to the priority of placing the 'runts,' the names in question.—*B.*

† They go to the barnyard, and pull each, at three several times, a stalk of oats. If the third stalk wants the 'top-pickle,' that is, the grain at the top of the stalk, the party in question will come to the marriage-bed anything but a maid.—*B.*

‡ When the corn is in a doubtful state, by being too green or wet, the stack-builder, by means of old timber, &c., makes a large apartment in his stack, with an opening in the side which is fairest exposed to the wind: this he calls a 'fause-house.'—*B.*

The auld Guidwife's weel-hoordet nits *
  Are round an' round divided,
An' monie lads and lasses' fates
  Are there that night decided:
Some kindle, couthie, side by side, agreeably
  An' burn thegither trimly; together
Some start awa, wi' saucy pride,
  And jump out-owre the chimlie fireplace
    Fu' high that night.

Jean slips in twa wi' tentie e'e; careful
  Wha 'twas, she wadna tell;
But this is *Jock*, an' this is *me*,
  She says in to hersel:
He bleez'd owre her, an' she owre him,
  As they wad never màir part,
Till fuff! he started up the lum, chimney
  An' Jean had e'en a sàir heart
    To see 't that night.

Poor Willie, wi' his bow-kail runt,
  Was brunt wi' primsie Mallie; prudish
An' Mary, nae doubt, took the drunt, pet
  To be compar'd to Willie: associated with
Mall's nit lap out wi' pridefu' fling, leaped
  An' her ain fit it brunt it;
While Willie lap, and swoor *by jing*,
  'Twas just the way he wanted
    To be that night.

Nell had the 'Fause-house' in her min',
  She pits hersel an' Rob in;
In loving bleeze they sweetly join,
  Till white in ase they 're sobbin: ashes
Nell's heart was dancin at the view;
  She whisper'd Rob to leuk for 't:

* Burning the nuts is a favourite charm. They name the lad and lass to each particular nut, as they lay them in the fire, and accordingly as they burn quietly together, or start from beside one another, the course and issue of the courtship will be.--*B.*

Rob, stownins, prie'd her bonie mou, stealthily—kissed—mouth
Fu' cozie in the neuk for 't, snugly
Unseen that night.

But Merran sat behint their backs, Marion
Her thoughts on Andrew Bell;
She lea'es them gashin at their cracks, engaged in conversation
And slips out by hersel: alone
She thro' the yard the nearest taks,
An' to the kiln she goes then,
An' darklins grapit for the bauks, in the dark—searched—cross-beams
And in the 'blue-clue'* throws then,
Right fear't that night.

An' ay she win't, an' ay she swat, winded
I wat she made nae jaukin; wot, know—delay
Till something held within the pat,
Guid L—d! but she was quakin! quaking
But whether 'twas the Deil himsel,
Or whether 'twas a bauk-en', end of a beam
Or whether it was Andrew Bell,
She did na wait on talkin
To spier that night. inquire

Wee Jenny to her Graunie says, grandmother
'Will ye go wi' me, Graunie?
I'll eat the apple at the glass,†
I gat frae uncle Johnie:' from
She fuff't her pipe wi' sic a lunt, quantity of smoke
In wrath she was sae vap'rin, agitated
She notic't na, an aizle brunt cinder
Her braw, new, worset apron worsted
Out thro' that night.

* Whoever would, with success, try this spell, must strictly observe these directions: Steal out, all alone, to the kiln, and, darkling, throw into the 'pot' a clue of blue yarn; wind it in a new clue off the old one; and, towards the latter end, something will hold the thread: demand, 'Wha hauds?' *i.e.*, Who holds? and answer will be returned from the kiln-pot, by naming the Christian and Sirname of your future spouse.—*B.*

† Take a candle and go alone to a looking-glass; eat an apple before it, and some traditions say, you should comb your hair all the time; the face of your conjugal companion, *to be*, will be seen in the glass, as if peeping over your shoulder.—*B.*

'Ye little Skelpie-limmer's face! *
I daur you try sic sportin,
As seek the foul Thief ony place,
For him to spae your fortune: foretell
Nae doubt but ye may get a sight!
Great cause ye hae to fear it;
For monie a ane has gotten a fright,
An' liv'd an' di'd deleeret insane
On sic a night.

'Ae Hairst afore the Sherra-moor,† A certain harvest
I mind 't as weel 's yestreen, yesterday
I was a gilpey then, I 'm sure young girl
I was na past fyfteen:
The Simmer had been cauld an' wat,
An' stuff was unco green; corn
An' ay a rantin kirn we gat, jovial harvest-home
And just on Halloween
It fell that night.

'Our "Stibble-rig"‡ was Rab M'Graen,
A clever, sturdy fallow;
His Sin gat Eppie Sim wi' wean, child
That liv'd in Achmacalla:§
He gat hemp-seed,‖ I mind it weel,
An' he made unco light o''t;
But monie a day was by himsel,
He was sae sairly frighted
That vera night.'

* A technical term in female scolding.

† The battle of Sheriffmuir, near Dunblane, fought in 1715.

‡ The leader of the reapers.

§ The locality of Achmacalla has never been identified. It has therefore been conjectured that Burns invented the name.

‖ Steal out unperceived, and sow a handful of hemp-seed, harrowing it with anything you can conveniently draw after you. Repeat, now and then—'Hemp-seed I saw thee, hemp-seed I saw thee; and him (or her) that is to be my true love, come after me and pou thee.' Look over your left shoulder, and you will see the appearance of the person invoked, in the attitude of pulling hemp. Some traditions say, 'Come after me, and shaw thee,' that is, show thyself; in which case, it simply appears. Others omit the harrowing, and say, 'Come after me, and harrow thee.'—*B.*

Then up gat fechtin Jamie Fleck, fighting
An' he swoor by his conscience, swore
That he could saw hemp-seed a peck; sow
For it was a' but nonsense;
The auld guidman raught down the pock, reached—bag
An' out a handfu' gied him; gave
Syne bad him slip frae 'mang the folk, Then—from
Sometime when nae ane see'd him,
An' try 't that night.

He marches thro' amang the stacks,
Tho' he was something sturtin; timorous
The graip he for a harrow taks, dung-fork
An' haurls at his curpin: drags—rear
An' ev'ry now an' then, he says,
'Hemp-seed I saw thee,
An' her that is to be my lass,
Come after me, and draw thee
As fast this night.'

He whistl'd up 'Lord Lenox' March,'
To keep his courage cheary;
Altho' his hair began to arch,
He was sae fley'd an' eerie: frightened
Till presently he hears a squeak,
An' then a grane an' gruntle; groan—grunting noise
He by his shouther gae a keek, look
An' tumbl'd wi' a wintle somersault
Out-owre that night.

He roar'd a horrid murder-shout,
In dreadfu' desperation!
An' young an' auld come rinnin out,
An' hear the sad narration:
He swoor 'twas hilchin Jean M'Craw, halting
Or crouchie Merran Humphie, crook-backed
Till stop! she trotted thro' them a';
An' wha was it but Grumphie the pig
Asteer that night! Moving about

Meg fain wad to the Barn gaen, would have gone
To winn three wechts o' naething; * corn-baskets
But for to meet the Deil her lane, all alone
She pat but little faith in:
She gies the Herd a pickle nits, few
An' twa red cheekit apples,
To watch, while for the barn she sets, goes
In hopes to see Tam Kipples
That vera night.

She turns the key wi' cannie thraw, gentle twist
An' owre the threshold ventures;
But first on Sawnie gies a ca', calls out the name of Satan
Syne bauldly in she enters:
A ratton rattl'd up the wa', rat
An' she cry'd, L—d preserve her!
An' ran thro' midden-hole an' a', pool beside the dunghill
An' pray'd wi' zeal and fervour,
Fu' fast that night.

They hoy't out Will, wi' sair advice; inveigled—persistent
They hecht him some fine braw ane; promised
It chanc'd the Stack he faddom't thrice,†
Was timmer-propt for thrawin;‡
He taks a swirlie, auld moss-oak, crooked
For some black, grousome Carlin; horrid-looking old woman
An' loot a winze, an' drew a stroke, oath
Till skin in blypes cam haurlin shreds—peeling
Aff's nieves that night. off his hands

* This charm must likewise be performed unperceived and alone. You go to the barn, and open both doors, taking them off the hinges if possible; for there is danger that the being about to appear, may shut the doors, and do you some mischief. Then take that instrument used in winnowing the corn, which in our country-dialect we call a 'wecht,' and go through all the attitudes of letting down corn against the wind. Repeat it three times, and the third time, an apparition will pass through the barn, in at the windy door, and out at the other, having both the figure in question, and the appearance or retinue, marking the employment or station in life.—*B.*

† Take an opportunity of going, unnoticed, to a 'bear-stack' [stack of bere or bigg, a kind of barley], and fathom it three times round. The last fathom of the last time, you will catch in your arms the appearance of your future conjugal yoke-fellow.—*B.*

‡ Propped all round with *timber* posts to prevent it from being blown out of shape.

A wanton widow Leezie was,
As cantie as a kittlen ; — lively—kitten
But, Och ! that night, amang the shaws, — woods
She got a fearfu' settlin !
She thro' the whins, an' by the cairn, — gorse
An' owre the hill gaed scrievin ; — careering
Whare three Lairds' lan's meet at a burn,*
To dip her left sark-sleeve in,
Was bent that night.

Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays, — waterfall—rivulet
As thro' the glen it wimpl't ; — meandered
Whyles round a rocky scaur it strays ; — bank of red earth
Whyles in a wiel it dimpl't ; — eddy
Whyles glitter'd to the nightly rays,
Wi' bickering, dancing dazzle ;
Whyles cookit underneath the braes, — crept
Below the spreading hazle,
Unseen that night.

Amang the brachens, on the brae, — ferns
Between her an' the moon,
The Deil, or else an outler Quey, — stray young cow
Gat up an' gae a croon : — moan
Poor Leezie's heart maist lap the hool ; — sheath
Near lav'rock-height she jumpit, — nearly as high as a lark's flight
But mist a fit, an' in the pool
Out-owre the lugs she plumpit,
Wi' a plunge that night.

In order, on the clean hearth-stane,
The 'luggies '† three are ranged,

* You go out, one or more, for this is a social spell, to a south running spring, or rivulet, where 'three lairds' lands meet,' and dip your left shirt sleeve. Go to bed in sight of a fire, and hang your wet sleeve before it to dry. Lie awake, and, sometime near midnight, an apparition, having the exact figure of the grand object in question, will come and turn the sleeve, as if to dry the other side of it.—*B.*

† Take three dishes, put clean water in one, foul water in another, leave the third empty ; blindfold a person, and lead him to the hearth where the dishes are ranged ; he (or she) dips the left hand : if by chance in the clean water, the future (husband or) wife will come to the bar of matrimony a maid ; if in the foul, a widow ; if in the empty dish, it foretells, with equal certainty, no marriage at all. It is repeated three times, and every time the arrangement of the dishes is altered.—*B.*

And ev'ry time great care is ta'en
To see them duly changed:
Auld uncle John, wha wedlock's joys
Sin' 'Mar's year'* did desire,
Because he gat the toom-dish thrice, empty
He heav'd them on the fire
In wrath that night.

Wi' merry sangs, an' friendly cracks,
I wat they did na weary; know
An' unco tales, an' funnie jokes,
Their sports were cheap an' cheary;
Till butter'd so'ns,† wi' fragrant lunt, steam
Set a' their gabs a-steerin; tongues wagging
Syne, wi' a social glass o' strunt, whisky
They parted aff careerin
Fu' blythe that night.‡

John Mayne,§ the author of the humorously descriptive 'Siller Gun,' and the fine ballad 'Logan Braes,' had attempted a poem, in twelve stanzas, on the subject of Halloween. It had appeared in *Ruddiman's Weekly Magazine*, November 1780. That Burns actually saw and improved upon this composition can scarcely be doubted, after reading the following specimens:

* * * *

Ranged round a bleezing ingle-side,
Where nowther cauld nor hunger bide, neither

* The year 1715, when John Erskine, eleventh Earl of Mar (b. 1675, d. 1732), headed an insurrection in Scotland in the interest of the Pretender, whom he proclaimed king.

† Sowens, with butter instead of milk to them, is always the Halloween Supper.—*B.*

‡ The majority of the ceremonies appropriate to Halloween, including all those of an adventurous character, are now disused. Meetings of young people still take place on that evening, both in country and town, but their frolics are usually limited to ducking for apples in tubs of water—a ceremony overlooked by Burns—the lottery of the dishes, and pulling cabbage-stalks.

§ Mayne, who was a native of Dumfries, and about the same age as Burns—according to one biographer, he was born in 1759, according to another, in 1761—rushed into print before his great coeval. In 1779, while he was still an apprentice printer in the office of the *Dumfries Journal*, he published the germ of the 'Siller Gun,' of which, when it was reprinted in an extended form in 1808, Scott wrote that 'it surpassed the efforts of Fergusson, and came near to those of Burns;' and, in 1781, in Glasgow, he published 'Logan Braes.' John Mayne, from being a printer, became a journalist, and ultimately the proprietor of the *Star* newspaper in London. He died there in 1836.

The farmer's house, wi' secret pride,
Will a' convene. * * *

Placed at their head the gudewife sits,
And deals round apples, pears, and nits,
Syne tells her guests how, at sic bits,
Where she has been,
Bogles hae gart folk tyne their wits — made—lose
At Halloween.

* * * *

A' things prepared in order due,
Gosh guide 's! what fearfu' pranks ensue!
Some i' the kiln-pat thraw a clue,
At whilk, bedeen,
Their sweethearts at the far-end pu',
At Halloween.

* * * *

But 'twere a langsome tale to tell
The gates o' ilka charm and spell; — ways
Ance gaun to saw hemp-seed himsel'
Puir Jock M'Lean
Plump in a filthy peat-pot fell,
At Halloween.

Half-felled wi' fear, and drookit weel, — drenched
He frae the mire dought hardly spiel; — climb
But frae that time the silly chiel
Did never grien — long
To cast his cantrips wi' the Deil,
At Halloween.

* * * *

SECOND EPISTLE TO DAVIE,*

A BROTHER POET.

AULD NEIBOR,

I 'm three times doubly o'er your debtor,
For your auld-farrant, frien'ly letter; — quaint
Tho' I maun say 't, I doubt ye flatter,
Ye speak sae fair;
For my puir, silly, rhymin, clatter
Some less maun sair. — serve

* David Sillar. See pp. 67, 144.

Hale be your heart, hale be your fiddle;
Lang may your elbuck jink an' diddle, elbow
Tae cheer you thro' the weary widdle struggle
O' war'ly cares,
Till bairns' bairns kindly cuddle grandchildren—fondle
Your auld, gray hairs.

But Davie, lad, I 'm red ye 're glaikit; informed—inattentive
I 'm tauld the Muse ye hae negleckit; told
An' gif it 's sae, ye sud be licket if—so—should—beaten
Until ye fyke; move uneasily, from pain
Sic hauns as you sud ne'er be faikit, hands—spared
Be hain't wha like. saved from exertion

For me, I 'm on Parnassus brink,
Rivin the words tae gar them clink; tearing at—make—rhyme
Whyles daez't wi' love, whyles daez't wi' drink, sometimes bewildered
Wi' jads or masons; lasses
An' whyles, but ay owre late, I think
Braw sober lessons. excellent

Of a' the thoughtless sons o' man,
Commen' me to the Bardie clan;
Except it be some idle plan
O' rhymin clink,
The devil-haet, that I sud ban, swear
They ever think.

Nae thought, nae view, nae scheme o' livin',
Nae cares tae gie us joy or grievin':
But just the pouchie put the nieve in, pocket—hand
An' while ought 's there, anything
Then, hiltie, skiltie, we gae scrivin', helter-skelter—careering
An' fash nae mair. bother

Leeze me on rhyme! it 's ay a treasure, commend me to
My chief, amaist my only pleasure,
At hame, a-fiel, at wark or leisure, abroad
The Muse, poor hizzie!

Tho' rough an' raploch be her measure, coarse
She 's seldom lazy.

Haud tae the Muse, my dainty Davie:
The warl' may play you monie a shavie; trick
But for the Muse, she 'll never leave ye,
Tho' e'er sae puir,
Na, even tho' limpin wi' the spavie spavin
Frae door tae door.

SONG.—FAREWELL TO BALLOCHMYLE.*

The Catrine woods were yellow seen,
The flowers decay'd on Catrine lee,
Nae lav'rock sang on hillock green,
But nature sicken'd on the e'e.
Thro' faded groves Maria sang,
Hersel in beauty's bloom the while;
And ay the wild-wood echoes rang,
Fareweel the braes o' Ballochmyle.

Low in your wintry beds, ye flowers,
Again ye 'll flourish fresh and fair;
Ye birdies dumb, in with'ring bowers,
Again ye 'll charm the vocal air.
But here alas! for me nae mair
Shall birdie charm, or floweret smile;
Fareweel the bonnie banks of Ayr,
Fareweel, fareweel! sweet Ballochmyle!

'Several of the poems,' says Gilbert Burns, 'were produced for the purpose of bringing forward some favourite sentiment of the author. He used to remark to me, that he could not well conceive

* Composed on the amiable and excellent family of Whitefoord's leaving Ballochmyle, when Sir John's misfortunes (arising through his connection, as a shareholder, with the banking establishment of Douglas, Heron, & Co., of Ayr) obliged him to sell the estate.—*B.*
'Maria' was Mary Anne Whitefoord, the eldest of Sir John's four daughters. She married Henry Kerr Cranstoun, grandson of William, fifth Lord Cranstoun. Her husband's sister married Professor Dugald Stewart, who subsequently became a friend of Burns, and who was proprietor of the 'Catrine woods' and 'Catrine lee' mentioned in the song. They adjoin Ballochmyle, and are about two miles from Mauchline.

a more mortifying picture of human life than a man seeking work. In casting about in his mind how this sentiment might be brought forward, the elegy "Man was made to Mourn" was composed.'

MAN WAS MADE TO MOURN.

A DIRGE.

When chill November's* surly blast
Made fields and forests bare,
One ev'ning, as I wander'd forth
Along the banks of Ayr,
I spy'd a man, whose aged step
Seem'd weary, worn with care;
His face was furrow'd o'er with years,
And hoary was his hair.

'Young stranger, whither wand'rest thou?'†
Began the rev'rend Sage;
'Does thirst of wealth thy step constrain,
Or youthful Pleasures rage?
Or haply, prest with cares and woes,
Too soon thou hast began
To wander forth, with me, to mourn
The miseries of man.

'The Sun that overhangs yon moors,
Out-spreading far and wide,
Where hundreds labour to support
A haughty lordling's pride;‡

* In the Common-place Book, this poem is alluded to under date 'August 1785. It is possible, therefore, that the 'chill November' alluded to may be the November of 1784.

† In the seventh of Shenstone's elegies these lines occur:

'Stranger, amidst this pealing rain,
Benighted, lonesome, whither wouldst thou stray?
Does wealth or power thy weary step constrain?'

Mr J. Logie Robertson, in that portion of his *Furth in Field* entitled 'Burns in a New Aspect,' traces very minutely the influence exercised upon Burns by Goldsmith, Young, Shenstone, Blair, and Beattie.

‡ Variation in Common-place Book—

'Yon sun that hangs o'er Carrick Moors,
That spread so far and wide
Where hundreds labor to support
The lordly Cassilis' pride.'

I 've seen yon weary winter-sun
Twice forty times return;
And ev'ry time has added proofs,
That Man was made to mourn.

'O Man! while in thy early years,
How prodigal of time!
Mis-spending all thy precious hours,
Thy glorious youthful prime!
Alternate Follies take the sway;
Licentious Passions burn;
Which tenfold force gives Nature's law
That Man was made to mourn.

'Look not alone on youthful Prime,
Or manhood's active might;
Man then is useful to his kind,
Supported is his right.
But see him on the edge of life,
With cares and Sorrows worn,
Then Age and Want, Oh! ill-match'd pair!
Show Man was made to mourn.

'A few seem favourites of Fate,
In Pleasure's lap carest;
Yet, think not all the Rich and Great
Are likewise truly blest.
But, Oh! what crowds in ev'ry land,
All wretched and forlorn,
Thro' weary life this lesson learn,
That Man was made to mourn.

'Many and sharp the num'rous ills
Inwoven with our frame!
More pointed still we make ourselves,
Regret, Remorse, and Shame!
And Man, whose heav'n-erected face
The smiles of love adorn,
Man's inhumanity to Man
Makes countless thousands mourn!

'See yonder poor, o'erlabour'd wight,
So abject, mean, and vile,
Who begs a brother of the earth
To give him leave to toil;
And see his lordly fellow-worm
The poor petition spurn,
Unmindful, tho' a weeping wife
And helpless offspring mourn.

'If I'm design'd yon lordling's slave—
By Nature's law design'd—
Why was an independent wish
E'er planted in my mind?
If not, why am I subject to
His cruelty, or scorn?
Or why has man the will and pow'r
To make his fellow mourn?

'Yet, let not this too much, my son,
Disturb thy youthful breast:
This partial view of human-kind
Is surely not the last!
The poor, oppressèd, honest man
Had never, sure, been born,
Had there not been some recompense
To comfort those that mourn!

'O Death! the poor man's dearest friend,
The kindest and the best!
Welcome the hour my aged limbs
Are laid with thee at rest!
The great, the wealthy fear thy blow,
From pomp and pleasure torn;
But, oh! a blest relief for those
That weary-laden mourn!'

The metrical structure, and some other features of this poem,

may be traced to an old stall-ballad, entitled the 'Life and Age of Man,' which Cromek recovered, and which opens thus:

Upon the sixteen hunder year
Of God and fifty-three,
Frae Christ was born, that bought us dear,
As writings testifie;
On January the sixteenth day,
As I did ly alone,
With many a sigh and sob did say,
Ah! man is made to moan.

Burns, in a letter to Mrs Dunlop, says: 'I had an old grand-uncle with whom my mother lived while in her girlish years; the good old man, for such he was, was long blind ere he died; during which time, his highest enjoyment was to sit down and cry, while my mother would sing the simple old song of the "Life and Age of Man."'

We now come to a poem, already cited in part, which illustrates, better than any other of its author's works, the home life of the Burnes family, and the character of its head. William Burnes had been in the habit, in accordance with an old Scottish custom which has not yet died out, of conducting family worship. After his death, it fell to the poet, as the eldest son, to take on himself the function of family-priest, and he conducted the cottage-worship every night when at home during the whole time of his residence at Mossgiel. William Ronald, who for a time was 'gaudsman' in Lochlea, and subsequently became a farmer on his own account near Beith, in Ayrshire, used to declare that he had never since listened to anything equal to Burns's exercises; and Mrs Begg was in the habit of saying the same thing. These facts form an interesting prelude to the poem in which Burns has placed on everlasting record this phase of the rustic life of Scotland. Gilbert Burns gives us an account of what immediately prompted his brother to compose this poem. 'He had frequently,' says Gilbert, 'remarked to me that he thought there was something peculiarly venerable in the phrase "Let us worship God," used by a decent sober head of a family introducing family-worship. To this sentiment of the author the world is indebted for "The Cotter's Saturday Night."' It must be noted that the poet found a model in one of the best poems of his predecessor Fergusson, entitled 'The Farmer's Ingle.'

THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT.*

INSCRIBED TO R. AIKEN, ESQ. †

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,
The short and simple annals of the poor.—GRAY.

My lov'd, my honor'd, much respected friend!
No mercenary bard his homage pays;
With honest pride, I scorn each selfish end,
My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and praise:
To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays,
The lowly train in life's sequester'd scene;
The native feelings strong, the guileless ways;
What Aiken in a cottage would have been;
Ah! tho' his worth unknown, far happier there I ween!

November chill blaws loud wi' angry sugh; whistling sound
The short'ning winter-day is near a close;‡

* Sainte-Beuve, in an article on Aloïsius Bertrand, after quoting that author's description of the interior of a farmhouse, whither he had gone for shelter from a storm, says: 'By the side of this, we may set the poet Burns's famous piece, "The Cotter's Saturday Night." We should then see in what respect, quite apart from poetic form, the latter maintains a great superiority. For, where Bertrand strives, above all, to be picturesque, Burns shows himself—in addition to this—cordial, moral, Christian, patriotic. His episode of Jenny introduces and personifies the chastity of emotion; the Bible, read aloud, casts a religious glow over the whole scene. Then come those lofty thoughts upon the greatness of old Scotland, which is based on such home-scenes as this: *Sic fortis Etruria crevit.*' Lockhart has probably given the final word of British criticism upon a poem whose weaknesses are as obvious as its merits, when he said: 'In spite of many feeble lines and some heavy stanzas, it appears to me that even Burns's genius would suffer more in estimation by being contemplated in the absence of this poem, than of any other single poem he has left us.'

† Probably the first verse and the inscription to Mr Aiken were added later.

‡ The opening verse of 'The Farmer's Ingle' bears a considerable resemblance to this:

Whan gloamin' gray out-owre the welkin keeks, peeps
Whan Bawtie ca's the owsen to the byre, drives
Whan Thrasher John, sair dung, his barn-door steeks, jaded—shuts
Whan lusty lasses at the dighting tire: winnowing
What bangs fu' leal the e'ening's coming cauld, beats—truly
And gars snaw-tappit winter freeze in vain; makes
Gars dowie mortals look baith blithe and bauld, doleful
Nor fleyed wi' a' the puirtith o' the plain; frightened
Begin, my Muse, and chant in hamely strain.'

The miry beasts retreating frae the pleugh;
The black'ning trains o' craws to their repose: crows
The toil-worn Cotter frae his labor goes,—
This night his weekly moil is at an end,
Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,
Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,
And weary, o'er the moor, his course does hameward bend.

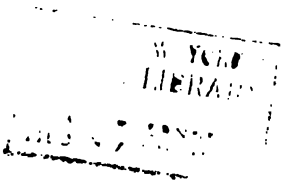
At length his lonely cot appears in view,
Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;
Th' expectant wee-things, toddlin, stacher through stagger
To meet their 'dad,' wi' flichterin' noise and glee. fluttering
His wee bit ingle, blinkin bonilie,
His clean hearth-stane, his thrifty wifie's smile,
The lisping infant, prattling on his knee,
Does a' his weary kiaugh and care beguile, anxiety
And make him quite forget his labor and his toil.

Belyve, the elder bairns come drappin in, By-and-by
At service out, amang the farmers roun';
Some ca' the pleugh, some herd, some tentie rin attentively
A cannie errand to a neibor town: private
Their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman-grown,
In youthfu' bloom—love sparkling in her e'e—
Comes hame; perhaps, to shew a braw new gown,
Or deposite her sair-won penny-fee, hard-earned wages
To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.

With joy unfeign'd, brothers and sisters meet,
And each for other's welfare kindly spiers: inquires
The social hours, swift-wing'd, unnotic'd fleet;
Each tells the uncos that he sees or hears. news
The parents partial eye their hopeful years;
Anticipation forward points the view;
The mother, wi' her needle and her sheers,
Gars auld claes look amaist as weel 's the new; Makes—clothes
The father mixes a' wi' admonition due.

E. Martin Hardie R.S.A.

Th' expectant wee things, toddlin', stacher through
To meet their dad, wi' flichterin noise and glee


LIBRARY

Their master's and their mistress's command,
The younkers a' are warnèd to obey;
And mind their labors wi' an eydent hand, diligent
And ne'er, tho' out o' sight, to jauk or play; dally
'And O! be sure to fear the Lord alway,
And mind your duty, duly, morn and night;
Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,
Implore His counsel and assisting might:
They never sought in vain that sought the Lord aright!'

But hark! a rap comes gently to the door;
Jenny, wha kens the meaning o' the same,
Tells how a neibor lad came o'er the moor,
To do some errands, and convoy her hame.
The wily mother sees the conscious flame
Sparkle in Jenny's e'e, and flush her cheek;
With heart-struck anxious care, enquires his name,
While Jenny hafflins is afraid to speak; almost
Weel-pleas'd the mother hears, it 's nae wild, worthless rake.

Wi' kindly welcome, Jenny brings him ben;
A strappin' youth, he takes the mother's eye;
Blythe Jenny sees the visit 's no ill ta'en; received
The father cracks of horses, pleughs, and kye.
The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy,
But blate an' laithfu', scarce can weel behave; bashful—hesitating
The mother, wi' a woman's wiles, can spy
What makes the youth sae bashfu' and sae grave;
Weel-pleas'd to think her bairn's respected like the lave. child—rest

O happy love! where love like this is found:
O heart-felt raptures! bliss beyond compare!
I 've pacèd much this weary, mortal round,
And sage experience bids me this declare,—
'If Heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare—
One cordial in this melancholy vale,
'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair
In other's arms, breathe out the tender tale,
Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the evening gale.'

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart,
A wretch! a villain! lost to love and truth!
That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art,
Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth?
Curse on his perjur'd arts! dissembling, smooth!
Are honor, virtue, conscience, all exil'd?
Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,
Points to the parents fondling o'er their child?
Then paints the ruin'd maid, and their distraction wild?

But now the supper crowns their simple board,
The halesome parritch, chief of Scotia's food; porridge
The sowpe their only hawkie does afford, food—cow
That, 'yont the hallan snugly chows her cood: porch—cud
The dame brings forth, in complimental mood,
To grace the lad, her weel-hain'd kebbuck, fell; well-matured cheese —tasty
And aft he 's prest, and aft he ca's it guid:
The frugal wifie, garrulous, will tell
How 'twas a towmond auld, sin' lint was i' the bell. twelvemonth—flax in flower

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er, with patriarchal grace,
The big ha'-bible, ance his father's pride: large Bible, that lay in the hall
His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets wearing thin and bare; gray side-locks
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales a portion with judicious care; selects
And 'Let us worship God!' he says with solemn air.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise,
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim;
Perhaps 'Dundee's' wild-warbling measures rise,
Or plaintive 'Martyrs,' worthy of the name;
Or noble 'Elgin' beets the heaven-ward flame, fans
The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays:
Compar'd with these, Italian trills are tame;
The tickl'd ears no heart-felt raptures raise;
Nae unison hae they, with our Creator's praise.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,
How Abram was the friend of God on high;
Or, Moses bade eternal warfare wage
With Amalek's ungracious progeny;
Or, how the royal bard did groaning lie
Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;
Or Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry;
Or rapt Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire;
Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;
How He, who bore in Heaven the second name,
Had not on earth whereon to lay His head:
How His first followers and servants sped;
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land:
How he, who lone in Patmos banishèd,
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand,
And heard great Bab'lon's doom pronounc'd by Heaven's command.

Then kneeling down to Heaven's Eternal King,
The saint, the father, and the husband prays:
Hope 'springs exulting on triumphant wing,' *
That thus they all shall meet in future days,
There, ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their Creator's praise,
In such society, yet still more dear;
While circling Time moves round in an eternal sphere.

Compar'd with this, how poor Religion's pride,
In all the pomp of method, and of art;
When men display to congregations wide
Devotion's ev'ry grace, except the heart!
The Power, incens'd, the pageant will desert,
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;
But haply, in some cottage far apart,
May hear, well pleas'd, the language of the soul;
And in His Book of Life the inmates poor enroll.

* Pope's 'Windsor Forest.'—*B.*

Then homeward all take off their sev'ral way;
The youngling cottagers retire to rest: youthful
The parent-pair their secret homage pay,
And proffer up to Heaven the warm request,
That He who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flow'ry pride,
Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide;
But chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine preside.

From scenes like these, old Scotia's grandeur springs,
That makes her lov'd at home, rever'd abroad:
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,
'An honest man 's the noblest work of God;'
And certes, in fair virtue's heavenly road,
The cottage leaves the palace far behind;
What is a lordling's pomp?—a cumbrous load,
Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,
Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refin'd!

O Scotia! my dear, my native soil!
For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent,
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content!
And O! may Heaven their simple lives prevent
From luxury's contagion, weak and vile!
Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,
A virtuous populace may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-lov'd isle.

O Thou! who pour'd the patriotic tide,
That stream'd thro' Wallace's undaunted heart,*
Who dar'd to, nobly, stem tyrannic pride,
Or nobly die, the second glorious part:
(The patriot's God, peculiarly thou art,
His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward!)
O never, never, Scotia's realm desert;

* This originally read 'Great, unhappy Wallace' heart.' The change to what appears in the text was made to please Burns's friend and correspondent, Mrs Dunlop.

But still the patriot, and the patriot-bard,
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard!

The 'Address to the Deil' appears to have been written in early winter, probably before the month of November had expired. Gilbert recollected his brother repeating the poem to him as they were driving their carts to bring coal for the family fire. 'The curious idea of such an address was,' he says, 'suggested to him by running over in his mind the many ludicrous accounts and representations we have from various quarters of this august personage.'

ADDRESS TO THE DEIL.

O Prince! O chief of many thronèd pow'rs!
That led th' embattl'd seraphim to war.—MILTON.

O THOU! whatever title suit thee—
Auld 'Hornie,' 'Satan,' 'Nick,' or 'Clootie,' *
Wha in yon cavern grim an' sootie,
Clos'd under hatches,
Spairges about the brunstane cootie, dashes—pail of brimstone
To scaud poor wretches! scald

Hear me, auld 'Hangie,' for a wee,
An' let poor damnèd bodies be;
I 'm sure sma' pleasure it can gie,
Ev'n to a deil,
To skelp an' scaud door dogs like me, slap—unmanageable
An' hear us squeel!

Great is thy pow'r an' great thy fame;
Far kenn'd an' noted is thy name;
An' tho' yon lowin heugh 's thy hame, burning pit
Thou travels far;
An' faith! thou 's neither lag nor lame, slow
Nor blate, nor scaur. bashful—apt to be scared

* A Scottish nickname for Satan, from his cloven feet or *cloots*.

Whyles, rangin like a roarin lion,
For prey, a' holes an' corners tryin;
Whyles, on the strong-wing'd tempest flyin,
Tirlin the kirks; Unroofing—churches
Whyles, in the human bosom pryin,
Unseen thou lurks.

I 've heard my rev'rend grannie say,
In lanely glens ye like to stray;
Or where auld ruin'd castles grey
Nod to the moon,
Ye fright the nightly wand'rer's way,
Wi' eldritch croon. weird

When twilight did my grannie summon,
To say her pray'rs, douse, honest woman!
Aft 'yont the dyke she 's heard you bummin,
Wi' eerie drone;
Or, rustlin, thro' the boortrees comin, elder-trees
Wi' heavy groan.

Ae dreary, windy, winter night,
The stars shot down wi' sklentin light, slanting
Wi' you mysel, I gat a fright,
Ayont the lough;
Ye, like a rash-buss, stood in sight, tuft of rushes
Wi' wavin sough. sound

The cudgel in my nieve did shake, fist
Each bristl'd hair stood like a stake,
When wi' an eldritch, stoor 'quaick, quaick,' deep-voiced
Amang the springs,
Awa ye squatter'd like a drake, noisy flight of a wild duck
On whistlin wings.

Let warlocks grim, an' wither'd hags,
Tell how wi' you, on ragweed nags, ragwort

They skim the muirs an' dizzy crags, moors
Wi' wicked speed;
And in kirk-yards renew their leagues,
Owre howket dead. dug-up

Thence, countra wives, wi' toil an' pain,
May plunge an' plunge the kirn in vain; churn
For oh! the yellow treasures taen
By witchin skill;
An' dawtet, twal-pint 'hawkie's' gane petted—cow
As yell 's the bill. milkless as the bull

Thence, mystic knots mak great abuse
On young guidmen, fond, keen an' croose; confident
When the best wark-lume i' the house,
By cantraip wit, magic
Is instant made no worth a louse,
Just at the bit.

When thowes dissolve the snawy hoord, thaws
An' float the jinglin icy boord,
Then, water-kelpies haunt the foord, water-spirits—ford
By your direction,
And 'nighted trav'llers are allur'd benighted
To their destruction.

And aft your moss-traversin 'Spunkies' Will-o'-the-wisps
Decoy the wight that late an' drunk is:
The bleezin, curst, mischievous monkies
Delude his eyes,
Till in some miry slough he sunk is,
Ne'er mair to rise.

When masons' mystic word an' grip
In storms an' tempests raise you up,
Some cock or cat your rage maun stop,
Or, strange to tell!
The youngest 'brither' ye wad whip
Aff straught to hell.

Lang syne in Eden's bonie yard, garden
When youthfu' lovers first were pair'd,
An' all the soul of love they shar'd,
The raptur'd hour—
Sweet on the fragrant flow'ry swaird, sward
In shady bow'r;*

Then you, ye auld, snick-drawin dog! †
Ye cam to Paradise *incog*,
An' play'd on man a cursèd brogue, trick
(Black be your fa'!)
An' gied the infant warld a shog, shake
'Maist ruin'd a'.

D'ye mind that day when in a bizz bustle
Wi' reeket duds, an' reestet gizz, smoked clothes—withered appearance
Ye did present your smootie phiz dirty face
'Mang better folk,
An' sklented on the man of Uzz cast
Your spitefu' joke?

An' how ye gat him i' your thrall,
An' brak him out o' house an' hal',
While scabs an' blotches ‡ did him gall,
Wi' bitter claw;
An' lows'd his ill-tongu'd, wicked scaul— scolding wife
Was warst ava?

But a' your doings to rehearse,
Your wily snares an' fechtin fierce,

* Until Burns's quarrel with the Armours, this verse ran:

'Lang syne, in Eden's happy scene
When strappin Adam's days were green,
And Eve was like my bonie Jean—
My dearest part,
A dancin, sweet, young handsome quean,
O' guileless heart.'

† 'Snick-drawin dog' means a person who opens doors by drawing the *sneck* or latch noiselessly.

‡ 'Botches' was the word used in this connection in all editions of Burns's Poems till that of 1794.

Sin' that day Michael did you pierce,
Down to this time,
Wad ding a Lallan tongue, or Erse, be too much for—Lowland Scots—Irish Gaelic
In prose or rhyme.

An now, auld 'Cloots,' I ken ye're thinkin,
A certain bardie's rantin, drinkin,
Some luckless hour will send him linkin,
To your black pit;
But, faith! he 'll turn a corner jinkin, dodging
An' cheat you yet.

But fare-you-weel, auld 'Nickie-ben!'
O wad ye tak a thought an' men'!
Ye aiblins might—I dinna ken— perhaps
Still hae a stake:
I'm wae to think upo' yon den,
Ev'n for your sake!

Burns's environment at this period calls for special notice. The following sketch was written by Dr Robert Chambers in 1833, after a visit to Mauchline:

'Mauchline is a parish town of above a thousand inhabitants,* in ancient times the seat of a priory belonging to Melrose, but now differing in no respect from a common agricultural village. It is situated upon a slope ascending from the margin of the Ayr, from which it is about two miles distant. One might at first suppose that a rustic population like that of Mauchline would form but a poor field for the descriptive and satirical genius of

* The population of the parish in 1791 is given in the *Statistical Account* as 1800, the town containing 1000, and the landward part 800. Dr Auld contributed the article on Mauchline to the *Statistical Account*. The following is his view of his parishioners: 'The manner of living and dress is much altered from what it was about 50 years ago. At that period, and for some time after, there were only two or three families in the parish who made use of tea daily; now it is done by, at least, one half of the parish, and almost the whole use it occasionally. At that period, good two-penny strong-ale and home-spirits were in vogue; but now even people in the middling and lower stations of life, deal much in foreign spirits, rum-punch, and wine. As to dress, about 50 years ago, there were few females who wore scarlet or silks. But now, nothing is more common than silk caps and silk coats; and women in a middling station are as fine as ladies of quality were formerly.' The population of Mauchline in 1891 was returned at 1454.

Burns. It is wonderful, however, how variously original many of the inhabitants of the most ordinary Scottish village will contrive to be. Human nature may be studied everywhere; and perhaps it nowhere assumes so many strikingly distinct forms as in a small cluster of men, such as is to be found in a town of a thousand inhabitants. In such a place every individual luxuriates in his own particular direction, till the whole become as well individualised as the objects of inanimate nature; while in a city the individual is lost in the mass, and no one is greatly different from another.

'In a small town, the character of every man is well known, so that everything he says and does is felt as characteristic, and enjoyed accordingly. One is a wag, another is a miser, a third exaggerates all he has to relate, a fourth (but this is apt to be less of a distinction) is over-inclined to strong waters. Every one is more or less a humorist, and, as such, affords a perpetual fund of amusement to his compeers. If Shakespeare could draw lively delineations of human character from such persons as the originals of Silence and Shallow, it may well be conceived that a genius like Burns must have seen as good subjects in many of the villagers of Mauchline. To give an idea of the taste for wit and humour which might exist in such a scene as this, we may quote what was said by a shopkeeper named D——, when on his death-bed, in reference to a person who had been to him and all the other inhabitants as the very sun and soul of fun for many years, and was recently deceased. Even in this melancholy condition, D—— said he accounted it no small consolation to reflect that he had *lived in the same days with John Weir*. The mind of the honest trader might no doubt have been filled with more fitting reflections at such a time; but it is impossible to doubt that it was from such escapes of natural character that the very happiest touches of both Shakespeare and Burns were derived.*

'Let us for a moment review the village as it was in external and moral respects in the days of Burns. First, in a central situation, stood its old barn-like church, surrounded by a burial-ground, full, as usual, of flat and upright monuments—the scene of those

* John Weir was father of the Sergeant Weir whose name has obtained a place in history in consequence of his specially gallant achievements at Waterloo.

prelections which the poet has described in his "Holy Fair." Close by are the remains of the ancient priory, consisting of little besides an old dismantled tower, beside which was planted the neat mansion of Gavin Hamilton the writer. He is a pleasant-natured man, with a young family rising around him. In his little business-room will be found one or two young scapegrace clerks, great cronies of Burns; one of them his correspondent, John Richmond. If you take your stand in the kirkyard, you see into Gavin's garden in one direction; in another, you see the back of Nanse Tinnock's change-house—the resort of yill-caup commentators during intervals of sermon, and the place in which Burns offered to drink the premier's health nine times a week, provided he would save aqua-vitæ from fiscal oppression. Nanse is a true ale-wife—quiet, civil, discreet, and no tale-teller. She would not blab even about Burns, but insisted to the end of her life that he had indulged very little in her house. In another direction, opposite the principal entrance to the churchyard, runs off a street called the Cowgate, in which Jeanie Armour lives. Here we see facing us a little white-faced inn of two storeys—the Whitefoord Arms—kept by one John Dove or Dow;* perhaps a greater haunt of the Mossgiel bard than Nansie's. Him Burns consigns to fame through the medium of a burlesque epitaph, no doubt presenting a tolerably just view of Dove's character:

EPITAPH ON JOHN DOVE,

INNKEEPER, MAUCHLINE.

Here lies Johnie Pigeon;
What was his religion?
Whaever desires to ken,

* It seems probable that Dove came originally from Paisley, and that he is the 'Paisley John' of another of Burns's poems. The Whitefoord Arms has been rebuilt, and is now a co-operative store, in two storeys, having on its central chimney this inscription—the work, according to the late Dr Edgar, of 'a local poetaster and worthy elder of the kirk:'

'The house, though built anew,
Where Burns cam weary frae the plough,
To hae a crack wi' Johnny Dow;
O' nights at een,
And whyles to taste the mountain dew
Wi' bonny Jean.'

To some other warl'
Maun follow the carl,
For here Johnie Pigeon had nane!

Strong ale was ablution—
Small beer—persecution,
A dram was "*memento mori*;"
But a full-flowing bowl
Was the saving his soul,
And port was celestial glory.

'In a good-looking shop in one of the streets of Mauchline, would have been found James Smith, a clever, little, dark-complexioned fellow, of bright social powers, and much sense and acuteness. To him Burns has cleaved like a brother, and many an evening do they spend together. Then, amongst the "characters," we have Poosie Nansie*—a beldame who keeps a lodging-house for vagrants. She is attended by a strange girl in the relation of daughter—yclept Racer Jess—who has run races for wagers, and is sometimes employed, on account of her speed of foot, in carrying messages throughout the country. Burns, Smith, and Richmond are not above enjoying the odd scenes presented in Poosie Nansie's hotel, where wretches passing before the world for maimed and blind, recover the use of limbs and senses, and compensate in a hearty supper for all the privations and contumelies which they suffer in their exoteric character by day. Wild intemperance and frantic merriment, mingled with frightful quarrels and broils, distinguish this scene of low life—which, nevertheless, is a scene not below the regard of one who finds a human heart beating even in the worst of his kind. Holy Willie, too, we may be sure, supplies in his canting language and sordid over-reaching habits abundant matter of remark to Burns and his friends. There is a zealot of a different stamp—James Humphry

* In 1773 it was reported to the kirk-session of Mauchline that Poosie Nansie, otherwise 'Agnes Ronald, wife of George Gibson,' was 'habitually drunk, troublesome to her neighbours, and frequently disturbs the sober passengers.' Being summoned before the session, she complied with the order, but only to flout the court, and to declare that she was 'resolved to continue in her disorderly way.' Thereupon it was minuted, on the motion of Mr Auld, that, 'the session, considering the aforesaid foolish resolution and expression, do immediately exclude her from the privileges of the church until she shall profess her repentance.' The same year the kirk-session declared that 'George Gibson keeps a very irregular house, and that his wife and daughter (Poosie Nansie and Racer Jess) are guilty of resetting stolen goods, knowing the same to be stolen.'

by name, a working-man, but the very type of a theological Scottish villager—a critic of sermons, a meddler with ministers, a pertinacious long-tongued disputant about texts—in short, the "noisy polemic" whom Burns has immortalised in an epitaph. He, we cannot doubt, must have afforded food for many a merry remark. The "unco guid" generally would be, of course, frequently canvassed in all the bearings of their characters—great joy would be felt when their decent robes gave way in aught, showing the unclean heart beneath. The more notedly self-indulgent, who only kept up a tolerable face of decency before society, if more mildly treated, would at least supply abundant themes of grotesque narration. Such the place, and such the persons, now forming the drama of life in which the poet moved, himself a phenomenon of no common kind, a subject of terror and aversion to many, on account of his imputed "wildness" and latitudinarianism, while with others he was as much an object of affection and admiration because of his generous heart, his immense powers of wit, and the wonderful productions of his Muse.'

This sketch will serve as a general introduction to the poems, 'The Jolly Beggars,' 'Epistle to James Smith,' 'The Holy Fair,' and some others.

THE JOLLY BEGGARS:

A CANTATA.

RECITATIVO.

When lyart leaves bestrow the yird, — withered—ground
Or wavering like the bauckie-bird, — bat
Bedim cauld Boreas' blast;
When hailstanes drive wi' bitter skyte, — slanting stroke
And infant frosts begin to bite,
In hoary cranreuch drest; — hoar-frost
Ae night at e'en a merry core — corps, party
O' randie, gangrel bodies,* — disorderly, vagrant
In Poosie-Nansie's held the splore, — merry-meeting
To drink their orra duddies: — superfluous rags

* 'Randie-beggars' was long a Scottish equivalent for 'gypsies.'

Wi' quaffing and laughing,
They ranted an' they sang,
Wi' jumping an' thumping,
The vera girdle* rang.

First, niest the fire, in auld red rags,
Ane sat, weel brac'd wi' mealy bags, — girdled with bags for holding the meal
And knapsack a' in order;
His doxy lay within his arm;
Wi' usquebae an' blankets warm — whisky
She blinket on her sodger:
An' ay he gies the tozie drab† — tipsy
The tither skelpin kiss, — noisy
While she held up her greedy gab, — mouth
Just like an aumous dish:‡
Ilk smack still did crack still,
Just like a cadger's whip; — hawker or carrier
Then staggering an' swaggering,
He roar'd this ditty up—

AIR.

TUNE—*Soldier's Joy.*

I am a son of Mars who have been in many wars,
And show my cuts and scars wherever I come;
This here was for a wench, and that other in a trench,
When welcoming the French at the sound of the drum.
Lal de daudle, &c.

* An iron plate, used in Scottish cottages for baking cakes over the fire.

† The late Dr Edgar showed, in his *Old Church Life in Scotland* (vol. i.), that the 'tozie drab' may possibly have been 'a vagrant woman called Agnes Wilson, of bad fame in the parish and places whence she came, who for more than six months past has been haunted and entertained by Elizabeth Black and George Gibson,' and who is dealt with in a minute of kirk-session, dated 6th March 1786. He regarded it as absolutely certain, at all events, that Agnes Wilson was the 'jurr' referred to in the humorous poem, 'Adam Armour's Prayer.'

‡ The Scottish beggars used to carry a large wooden dish for the reception of any alms which took the shape of food. The same utensil seems to have once been (if it is not so still) a part of the accoutrements of a continental beggar. When the revolted Netherlanders, in the sixteenth century, assumed the character of *Les Gueux*, or the Beggars, a beggar's *wooden cup* was one of their insignia.

My prenticeship I past where my leader breath'd his last,
When the bloody die was cast on the heights of Abram:*
And I servèd out my trade when the gallant game was play'd,
And the Moro† low was laid at the sound of the drum.
Lal de daudle, &c.

I lastly was with Curtis among the floating batt'ries,‡
And there I left for witness an arm and a limb;
Yet let my country need me, with Elliot§ to head me,
I'd clatter on my stumps at the sound of a drum.
Lal de daudle, &c.

And now tho' I must beg, with a wooden arm and leg,
And many a tatter'd rag hanging over my bum,
I'm as happy with my wallet, my bottle and my callet, trull
As when I used in scarlet to follow a drum.
Lal de daudle, &c.

What tho', with hoary locks, I must stand the winter shocks,
Beneath the woods and rocks, oftentimes for a home,
When the tother bag I sell, and the tother bottle tell,
I could meet a troop of hell, at the sound of a drum.
Lal de daudle, &c.

RECITATIVO.

He ended; and the kebars sheuk, rafters
Aboon the chorus roar;
While frighted rattons backward leuk, rats
An' seek the benmost bore: innermost hole

* The battle-ground in front of Quebec, where Wolfe fell victorious, September 1759. So called from Maitre Abraham, a local pilot.

† El Moro, the castle which defends the entrance to the harbour of Santiago or St Jago, a small island near the southern shore of Cuba. It is situated on an eminence, the abutments being cut out of the limestone rock. In 1762 the castle was stormed and taken by the British, after which Havana was surrendered, with spoil to the value of three millions.

‡ 'The destruction of the Spanish floating-batteries during the famous siege of Gibraltar in 1782—on which occasion the gallant Captain Curtis rendered the most signal service—is the heroic exploit here referred to.'—MOTHERWELL.

§ George Augustus Eliott, created Lord Heathfield for his gallant and successful defence of Gibraltar during a siege of three years. Born 1717, died 1790.

A fairy fiddler frae the neuk, corner
He skirl'd out, encore!
But up arose the martial chuck, sweetheart
An' laid the loud uproar.

AIR.

TUNE—*Sodger Laddie.*

I once was a maid, tho' I cannot tell when,
And still my delight is in proper young men:
Some one of a troop of dragoons was my daddie,
No wonder I 'm fond of a sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de dal, &c.

The first of my loves was a swaggering blade,
To rattle the thundering drum was his trade;
His leg was so tight, and his cheek was so ruddy,
Transported I was with my sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de dal, &c.

But the godly old chaplain left him in the lurch;
The sword I forsook for the sake of the church:
He ventur'd the soul, and I risket the body,
'Twas then I prov'd false to my sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de dal, &c.

Full soon I grew sick of my sanctified sot,
The regiment at large for a husband I got;
From the gilded spontoon to the fife I was ready,
I askèd no more but a sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de dal, &c.

But the peace it reduc'd me to beg in despair,
Till I met my old boy in a Cunningham fair;
His rags regimental they flutter'd so gaudy,
My heart it rejoic'd at a sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de dal, &c.

And now I have liv'd—I know not how long,
And still I can join in a cup and a song;
But whilst with both hands I can hold the glass steady,
Here 's to thee, my hero, my sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de dal, &c.

RECITATIVO.

Poor Merry-Andrew, in the neuk,
Sat guzzling wi' a tinkler-hizzie; tinker-wench
They mind't na wha the chorus teuk,
Between themselves they were sae busy:
At length, wi' drink an' courting dizzy,
He stoiter'd up an' made a face; staggered
Then turn'd, an' laid a smack on Grizzie, kiss
Syne tun'd his pipes wi' grave grimace.

AIR.

TUNE—*Auld Sir Symon.*

Sir Wisdom 's a fool when he 's fou; drunk
Sir Knave is a fool in a session;*
He 's there but a prentice I trow,
But I am a fool by profession.

My grannie she bought me a beuk,
An' I held awa to the school;
I fear I my talent misteuk,
But what will ye hae of a fool?

For drink I would venture my neck;
A hizzie 's the half of my craft; wench
But what could ye other expect,
Of ane that 's avowedly daft? crazy

I ance was ty'd up like a stirk, bullock
For civilly swearing and quaffing;
I ance was abus'd i' the kirk,
For towsing a lass i' my daffin. rumpling—fun

* When being tried criminally.

Poor Andrew that tumbles for sport,
Let nae body name wi' a jeer;
There 's even, I 'm tauld, i' the Court
A tumbler ca'd the Premier.

Observ'd ye yon reverend lad
Mak faces to tickle the mob;
He rails at our mountebank squad,
It 's rivalship just i' the job.

And now my conclusion I 'll tell,
For faith I 'm confoundedly dry:
The chiel that 's a fool for himself,
Guid L—d, he 's far dafter than I.

RECITATIVO.

Then niest outspak a raucle carlin, stout beldame
Wha kent fu' weel to cleek the sterlin; steal
For mony a pursie she had hooked,
An' had in mony a well been douked:
Her love had been a Highland laddie,
But weary fa' the waefu' woodie! gallows
Wi' sighs an' sobs she thus began
To wail her braw John Highlandman.

AIR.

TUNE—*O an' ye were dead, Gudeman.*

A Highland lad my love was born,
The lalland laws he held in scorn; Lowland
But he still was faithfu' to his clan,
My gallant, braw John Highlandman.

CHORUS.

Sing hey my braw John Highlandman!
Sing ho my braw John Highlandman!
There 's not a lad in a' the lan'
Was match for my John Highlandman.

With his philibeg an' tartan plaid, kilt
An' guid claymore down by his side, good broadsword
The ladies' hearts he did trepan,
My gallant, braw John Highlandman.
Sing hey, &c.

We rangèd a' from Tweed to Spey,
An' liv'd like lords an' ladies gay;
For a lalland face he fearèd none,
My gallant, braw John Highlandman.
Sing hey, &c.

They banish'd him beyond the sea,
But ere the bud was on the tree,
Adown my cheeks the pearls ran,
Embracing my John Highlandman.
Sing hey, &c.

But Och! they catch'd him at the last,
And bound him in a dungeon fast,
My curse upon them every one,
They 've hang'd my braw John Highlandman.
Sing hey, &c.

And now a widow I must mourn
The pleasures that will ne'er return;
No comfort but a hearty can,
When I think on John Highlandman.
Sing hey, &c.

RECITATIVO.

A pigmy scraper wi' his fiddle,
Wha us'd at trystes an' fairs to driddle, cattle fairs—play
Her strappin limb an' gausy middle powerful—buxom
(He reach'd nae higher)
Had hol'd his heartie like a riddle, sieve
An' blawn 't on fire. blown

Wi' hand on hainch, and upward e'e, haunch
He croon'd his gamut, one, two, three, murmured
Then in an arioso key,
The wee Apollo
Set off wi' allegretto glee
His giga solo.

AIR.

TUNE—*Whistle owre the lave o''t.*

Let me ryke up to dight that tear, reach—wipe
An' go wi' me an' be my dear;
An' then your every care an' fear
May whistle owre the lave o''t. rest

CHORUS.

I am a fiddler to my trade,
An' a' the tunes that e'er I play'd,
The sweetest still to wife or maid,
Was whistle owre the lave o''t.

At kirns an' weddins we'se be there, harvest-homes
An' O sae nicely 's we will fare!
We'll bowse about till Dadie Care booze
Sing whistle owre the lave o''t.
I am, &c.

Sae merrily 's the banes we'll pyke, bones—pick
An' sun oursells about the dyke; wall, fence
An' at our leisure, when ye like,
We'll whistle owre the lave o''t.
I am, &c.

But bless me wi' your heav'n o' charms,
An' while I kittle hair on thairms, apply hair to catgut
Hunger, cauld, an' a' sic harms cold
May whistle owre the lave o''t.
I am, &c.

RECITATIVO.

Her charms had struck a sturdy caird, gipsy
As weel as poor gutscraper; well
He taks the fiddler by the beard,
An' draws a roosty rapier— rusty
He swoor by a' was swearing worth
To speet him like a pliver, spit—plover for roasting
Unless he would from that time forth
Relinquish her for ever:

Wi' ghastly e'e, poor tweedledee eye
Upon his hunkers bended, knees
An' pray'd for grace wi' ruefu' face,
An' so the quarrel ended;
But tho' his little heart did grieve,
When round the tinkler prest her,
He feign'd to snirtle in his sleeve, laugh
When thus the caird address'd her:

AIR.

TUNE—*Clout the Caudron.*

My bonie lass, I work in brass,
A tinkler is my station;
I 've travell'd round all Christian ground
In this my occupation;
I 've ta'en the gold an' been enroll'd
In many a noble squadron;
But vain they search'd when off I march'd
To go an' clout the caudron. mend
I 've ta'en the gold, &c.

Despise that shrimp, that withered imp,
With a' his noise an' cap'rin;
An' take a share with those that bear
The budget and the apron! bag of tools

And *by* that stowp! my faith an' houpe, stoup—hope
And *by* that dear Kilbaigie,*
If e'er ye want, or meet wi' scant,
May I ne'er weet my craigie. wet—throat
And by that stowp, &c.

RECITATIVO.

The caird prevail'd—th' unblushing fair
In his embraces sunk;
Partly wi' love o'ercome sae sair,
An' partly she was drunk:
Sir Violino, with an air
That show'd a man o' spunk, mettle
Wish'd unison between the pair,
An' made the bottle clunk give a hollow sound, as if empty
To their health that night.

But hurchin Cupid shot a shaft, urchin
That play'd a dame a shavie— trick
The fiddler rak'd her, fore and aft,
Behint the chicken cavie. coop
Her lord, a wight of Homer's craft,†
Tho' limpin wi' the spavie, spavin
He hirpl'd up, an' lap like daft, leaped as if mad
An' shor'd them *Dainty Davie* promised
O' boot that night. into the bargain

He was a care-defying blade
As ever Bacchus listed!
Tho' Fortune sair upon him laid, sorely
His heart she ever miss'd it.
He had no wish but—to be glad,
Nor want but—when he thirsted;
He hated nought but—to be sad,
An' thus the Muse suggested
His sang that night.

* A peculiar sort of whisky so called, a great favorite with Poosie Nansie's clubs.—*R. B.* It was made at Kilbaigie distillery, in the county of Clackmannan.
† Homer is allowed to be the oldest ballad-singer on record.—*R. B.*

AIR.

TUNE—*For a' that an' a' that.*

I am a Bard of no regard,
Wi' gentle folks an' a' that;
But Homer like, the glowrin byke, staring multitude
Frae town to town I draw that.

CHORUS.

For a' that an' a' that,
An' twice as muckle 's a' that, much
I 've lost but ane, I 've twa behin',
I 've wife eneugh for a' that. enough

I never drank the Muses' stank, fountain
Castalia's burn an' a' that;
But there it streams an' richly reams,
My Helicon * I ca' that. call
For a' that, &c.

Great love I bear to all the fair,
Their humble slave an' a' that;
But lordly will, I hold it still
A mortal sin to thraw that. cross
For a' that, &c.

In raptures sweet this hour we meet,
Wi' mutual love an' a' that;
But for how lang the flie may stang,
Let inclination law that.
For a' that, &c.

Their tricks an' craft hae put me daft,
They 've ta'en me in, an' a' that;
But clear your decks, an' here 's the Sex!
I like the jads for a' that. jades

CHORUS.

For a' that an' a' that,
An' twice as muckle 's a' that,

* Here, as elsewhere, Burns speaks of Helicon as a spring.

My dearest bluid, to do them guid,
They 're welcome till 't for a' that.

RECITATIVO.

So sung the bard—and Nansie's wa's — walls
Shook with a thunder of applause
Re-echo'd from each mouth!
They toom'd their pocks, they pawn'd their duds, — emptied — bags — clothes
They scarcely left to coor their fuds, — cover — posteriors
To quench their lowin drouth, — burning thirst
Then owre again the jovial thrang — crew
The poet did request
To lowse his pack an' wale a sang, — open — select
A ballad o' the best;
He, rising, rejoicing,
Between his twa Deborahs,
Looks round him, an' found them
Impatient for the chorus.

AIR.

TUNE—*Jolly Mortals, fill your glasses.*

See the smoking bowl before us,
Mark our jovial, ragged ring!
Round and round take up the chorus,
And in raptures let us sing—

CHORUS.

A fig for those by law protected!
Liberty 's a glorious feast!
Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the priest.

What is title, what is treasure,
What is reputation's care?
If we lead a life of pleasure,
'Tis no matter how or where.
A fig, &c.

With the ready trick and fable,
Round we wander all the day;
And at night, in barn or stable,
Hug our doxies on the hay.
A fig, &c.

Does the train-attended carriage
Thro' the country lighter rove?
Does the sober bed of marriage
Witness brighter scenes of love?
A fig, &c.

Life is all a variorum,
We regard not how it goes;
Let them cant about decorum,
Who have character to lose.
A fig, &c.

Here 's to budgets, bags and wallets!
Here 's to all the wandering train!
Here 's our ragged brats and callets! children—wenches
One and all cry out, Amen!
A fig, &c.*

The poem is believed to have been founded on the poet's

* 'In one or two passages of "The Jolly Beggars," the Muse has slightly trespassed on decorum, where, in the language of Scottish song:

"High kilted was she,
As she gaed owre the lea."

Something, however, is to be allowed to the nature of the subject, and something to the education of the poet; and if from veneration to the names of Swift and Dryden, we tolerate the grossness of the one and the indelicacy of the other, the respect due to that of Burns may surely claim indulgence for a few light strokes of broad humour.'—SIR WALTER SCOTT.

'The world of Chaucer is fairer, richer, more significant than that of Burns; but when the largeness and freedom of Burns get full sweep, as in "Tam o' Shanter," or still more in that puissant and splendid production, "The Jolly Beggars," his world may be what it will, his poetic genius triumphs over it. In the world of "The Jolly Beggars" there is more than hideousness and squalor, there is bestiality; yet the piece is a superb poetic success. It has a breadth, truth, and power which make the famous scene in Auerbach's cellar, of Goethe's *Faust*, seem artificial and tame beside it, and which are only matched by Shakespeare and Aristophanes.'—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

'His masterpiece, "The Jolly Beggars," like "The Gueux" of Béranger; but how much more picturesque, varied, and powerful!'—TAINE.

observation of an actual scene which one night met his eye, when, in company with his friends John Richmond and James Smith, he dropped accidentally, at a late hour, into the house of Poosie Nansie. After witnessing much jollity amongst a company who by day appeared abroad as miserable beggars, the three young men came away, Burns professing to have been greatly amused with the scene, but particularly with the behaviour of an old maimed soldier. In the course of a few days, he recited a part of the poem to Richmond, who used to say that, to the best of his recollection, it contained, in its original form, songs by a sweep and a sailor, which did not afterwards appear.*

'The Jolly Beggars' is said not to have been admired by the

* There was a kind of pattern or model for this singular composition in a song entitled 'The Merry Beggars,' which appears in *The Charmer*, 2 vols., 1751:

THE MERRY BEGGARS.

1st Beggar. I once was a poet at London,
I keep my heart still full of glee;
There 's no man that can say that I 'm undone,
For begging 's no new trade to me.

2d Beg. I once was an attorney-at-law,
And after a knight of the post;
Give me a nice wench and clean straw,
And I value not who rules the roast.

3d Beg. Make room for a soldier in buff,
Who valiantly strutted about,
Till he fancied the peace breaking off,
And then he most wisely sold out.

4th Beg. Here comes a courtier polite, sir,
Who flattered my lord to his face;
Now railing is all his delight, sir,
Because he missed getting a place.

5th Beg. I still am a merry gut-scraper,
My heart never yet felt a qualm;
Though poor, I can frolic and vapour,
And sing any tune but a psalm.

6th Beg. I was a fanatical preacher,
I turned up my eyes when I prayed;
But my hearers half-starvèd their teacher,
For they believed not a word that I said.

1st Beg. Whoe'er would be merry and free,
Let him list and from us he may learn;
In palaces who shall you see
Half so happy as we in a barn.

CHORUS OF ALL.

Whoe'er would be merry, &c.

Mossgiel household, and there is no evidence that Burns contemplated giving it to the world. On the contrary, he laid it aside, and in a few years had forgotten its existence. On being reminded of it by George Thomson in 1793, he said, in a letter dated 13th September of that year: 'I have forgot the cantata you allude to, as I kept no copy, and indeed did not know of its existence; however, I remember that none of the songs pleased myself, except the last, something about—

> Courts for cowards were erected,
> Churches built to please the priest.'

The cantata was first published, in an imperfect form, towards the end of last century, by Stewart & Meikle of Glasgow. In 1802, it was published in a complete form by Thomas Stewart; and in 1823 Messrs Lumsden, also of Glasgow, issued the complete poem in *fac-simile*.

Here may be introduced two songs which appeared in Johnson's *Museum* in 1790. The first is an altered version of the Bard's first song in 'The Jolly Beggars;' the second seems to have been the first draft of the caird's song:

SONG—FOR A' THAT AN' A' THAT.

Tho' women's minds, like winter winds,
May shift, and turn, an' a' that,
The noblest breast adores them maist, — most
A consequence I draw that.

Chorus.—For a' that an' a' that,
And twice as mickle as a' that;
The bony lass that I loe best — love
She 'll be my nin for a' that. — own

Great love I bear to all the fair,
Their humble slave, an' a' that,
But lordly will, I hold it still
A mortal sin to thraw that. — cross
For a' that, &c.

But there is ane aboon the lave, superior to the rest
Has wit, and sense, an' a' that;
A bonie lass, I like her best,
And wha a crime dare ca' that? call
For a' that, &c.

In rapture sweet this hour we meet,
Wi' mutual love, an' a' that,
But for how lang the flie may stang,
Let inclination law that.
For a' that, &c.

Their tricks and craft hae put me daft,
They 've taen me in, an' a' that;
But clear your decks, and here 's 'The sex!'
I like the jads for a' that. jades
For a' that, &c.

SONG—KISSIN MY KATIE.

TUNE—*The bob o' Dumblane.*

O merry hae I been teethin a heckle,*
An' merry hae I been shapin a spoon;
O merry hae I been cloutin a kettle, mending
An' kissin my Katie when a' was done.
O, a' the lang day I ca' at my hammer,
An' a' the lang day I whistle and sing;
O, a' the lang night I cuddle my kimmer, companion or mistress
An' a' the lang night as happy 's a king.

Bitter in dool I lickit my winnins grief—ate the fruit of—earnings
O' marrying Bess, to gie her a slave:
Blest be the hour she cool'd in her linnens,
And blythe be the bird that sings on her grave!
Come to my arms, my Katie, my Katie,
An' come to my arms and kiss me again!
Drucken or sober, here 's to thee, Katie! drunken
And blest be the day I did it again.

* Soldering fresh teeth to a flax-dresser's comb.

Here, finally, may be given, as it is full of the spirit of 'The Jolly Beggars,' another of those broadly comic compositions in which Burns, like many other poets, reproduced the humours of the time and place he lived in, but which he intended for the delectation of a few private friends. It deals with one of the 'scandals' of Mauchline, and the heroine of it appears to have been Agnes Wilson, who, as has been seen, figures in a kirk-session minute of March 6, 1786, as having been 'haunted and entertained by Elizabeth Black and George Gibson.' In that minute it is also stated 'that the bad reputation of this woman, as being lewd and of immoral practices, has been the occasion of a late disturbance in this place.' The 'practices' of Agnes, who acted as servant journeywoman, or 'jurr,' to George Gibson and his wife—'grim, black-bearded Geordie' and 'drucken Nanse'—caused a number of lads in the village, headed by one Adam Armour, possibly a younger brother of Jean,* to make her 'ride the stang,' or, in other words, to place her astride of a rantle-tree, or other wooden pole, and carry her in procession through the streets of Mauchline. The 'jurr's' employers resented this outrage, and threatened its perpetrators with criminal proceedings. In consequence, Adam Armour absconded. In his wanderings he appears to have met Burns, and the result was

ADAM ARMOUR'S PRAYER.†

Gude pity me, because I 'm little!
For though I am an elf o' mettle,
An' can, like ony wabster's shuttle, — weaver's
Jink there or here, — dodge about
Yet, scarce as lang 's a gude kail-whittle, — cabbage-knife
I 'm unco queer. — uncommon

* 'The representatives of Jean's family tell me that they never heard of any Adam Armour in Mauchline in the days of Burns, except Jean's brother. In the Baptismal and Burial Registers of Mauchline Parish there is no trace of the birth of any Adam Armour in the parish between 1730 and 1786, except Jean's brother, who was born in 1771; and there is no trace of the death of any Adam Armour in the parish between 1786 and 1820. Adam Armour, Jean's brother, was just such a fellow as would be sure to be in a village row. He was rather under middle size, but his being only fifteen years old in 1786 explains how he is called in the poem "little," and "scarce as lang 's a guid kail-whittle."'—*Dr Edgar*, in *Old Church Life in Scotland*. Allan Cunningham declared he had the verses from Adam Armour, Jean's brother, and that Adam told him the circumstances under which they were written.

† This poem was first published in the *Edinburgh Magazine* for January 1808.

An' now Thou kens our woefu' case ;
For Geordie's 'jurr' we 're in disgrace,
Because we 'stang'd' her through the place,
An' hurt her spleuchan ;
For whilk we daurna show our face — dare not
Within the clachan. — village

An' now we 're dernd in dens and hollows, — concealed
And hunted, as was William Wallace,
Wi' constables—thae blackguard fallows,
An' sodgers baith ; — both
But Gude preserve us frae the gallows,
That shamefu' death !

Auld grim black-bearded Geordie's sel'—
O shake him owre the mouth o' hell ! — over
There let him hing, an' roar, an' yell — hang
Wi' hideous din,
And if he offers to rebel,
Then heave him in.

When Death comes in wi' glimmerin blink,
An' tips auld drucken Nanse the wink, — drunken
May Sautan gie her doup a clink
Within his yett,
An' fill her up wi' brimstone drink,
Red-reekin het.

Though Jock an' hav'rel Jean are merry*— — silly
Some devil seize them in a hurry,
An' waft them in th' infernal wherry
Straught through the lake, — straight
An' gie their hides a noble curry
Wi' oil of aik ! — oak stick

As for the 'jurr'—puir worthless body !
She's got mischief enough already ;

* 'Jock' and 'hav'rel Jean' (the half-witted 'Racer Jess') were son and daughter of Geordie and Nanse.

Wi' stanget hips, and buttocks bluidy,
She 's suffer'd sair;
But, may she wintle in a woody, spin round on the gallows
If she wh—e mair!

This would have been the proper place to introduce a poem known as 'The Court of Equity,' dated 'Mauchline, 12th May 1786,' and probably written in the previous year, in which Burns chronicled certain of the doings of the bachelors who were in the habit of meeting in the Whitefoord Arms. They constituted themselves into a mock Court—Burns being president, Smith fiscal, and Richmond clerk—to examine into the 'scandals' in Mauchline, and, in particular, to bring to book 'marauders,' or offenders against ordinary sexual morality, who sought by various means to escape the penalty of their offences. It is full of humanity and tenderness, but it is too 'broad' for publication.

EPISTLE TO JAMES SMITH.

Friendship, mysterious cement of the soul!
Sweet'ner of Life, and solder of Society!
I owe thee much.—BLAIR.

Dear Smith, the slee'st, pawkie thief, slyest—cunning
That e'er attempted stealth or rief! robbery
Ye surely hae some warlock-breef spell
Owre human hearts; over
For ne'er a bosom yet was prief proof
Against your arts.

For me, I swear by sun an' moon,
An' ev'ry star that blinks aboon, twinkles
Ye've cost me twenty pair o' shoon shoes
Just gaun to see you; going
An' ev'ry ither pair that 's done, other
Mair taen I 'm wi' you. More taken

That auld, capricious carlin, Nature, hag
To mak amends for scrimpet stature, stinted

She 's turn'd you off, a human-creature
On her first plan,
And in her freaks, on ev'ry feature
She 's wrote the Man.

Just now I 've taen the fit o' rhyme,
My barmie noddle 's working prime, excited brain
My fancy yerket up sublime, tightened
Wi' hasty summon :
Hae ye a leisure-moment's time
To hear what 's comin ?

Some rhyme a neibor's name to lash ; neighbour's
Some rhyme (vain thought !) for needfu' cash ;
Some rhyme to court the countra clash,*
An' raise a din ;
For me, an aim I never fash ; think of
I rhyme for fun.

The star that rules my luckless lot,
Has fated me the russet coat,
An' damn'd my fortune to the groat ;
But, in requit, by way of compensation
Has blest me with a random-shot
O' countra wit. rustic

This while my notion 's taen a sklent, bend
To try my fate in guid, black prent ; print
But still the mair I 'm that way bent,
Something cries ' Hoolie ! Gently
I red you, honest man, tak tent ! warn—heed
Ye 'll shaw your folly ; show

' There 's ither poets, much your betters,
Far seen in Greek, deep men o' letters, well-versed
Hae thought they had ensur'd their debtors,
A' future ages ;
Now moths deform, in shapeless tatters
Their unknown pages.'

* Get gossiped about in the district.

Then farewell hopes of laurel-boughs,
To garland my poetic brows!
Henceforth I'll rove where busy ploughs
Are whistlin thrang, busily
An' teach the lanely heights an' howes lonely hills and dales
My rustic sang. song

I'll wander on, wi' tentless heed utterly careless *
How never-halting moments speed,
Till fate shall snap the brittle thread;
Then, all unknown,
I'll lay me with th' inglorious dead,
Forgot and gone!

But why o' death begin a tale?
Just now we're living sound an' hale; strong
Then top and maintop crowd the sail,
Heave Care o'er-side!
And large, before Enjoyment's gale,
Let's tak the tide.

This life, sae far's I understand,
Is a' enchanted fairy-land,
Where Pleasure is the magic-wand,
That, wielded right,
Maks hours like minutes, hand in hand,
Dance by fu' light. full

The magic-wand then let us wield;
For, ance that five-an'-forty's speel'd, reached
See, crazy, weary, joyless eild, old age
Wi' wrinkl'd face,
Comes hostin, hirplin owre the field, coughing—limping over
Wi' creepin pace.

When ance life's day draws near the gloamin, once—twilight
Then fareweel vacant, careless roamin;
An' fareweel cheerfu' tankards foamin,
An' social noise:
An' fareweel dear, deluding woman,
The joy of joys!

* But see note on p. 97.

O Life! how pleasant, in thy morning,
Young Fancy's rays the hills adorning!
Cold-pausing Caution's lesson scorning,
We frisk away,
Like school-boys, at th' expected warning,
To joy an' play.

We wander there, we wander here,
We eye the rose upon the brier,
Unmindful that the thorn is near,
Among the leaves;
And tho' the puny wound appear,
Short while it grieves.

Some, lucky, find a flow'ry spot,
For which they never toil'd nor swat; sweated
They drink the sweet and eat the fat,
But care or pain; Without
And haply eye the barren hut
With high disdain.

With steady aim, some fortune chase;
Keen hope does ev'ry sinew brace;
Thro' fair, thro' foul, they urge the race,
An' seize the prey:
Then cannie, in some cozie place, quietly—snug
They close the day.

And others, like your humble servan',
Poor wights! nae rules nor roads observin, no
To right or left eternal swervin,
They zig-zag on;
Till, curst with age, obscure an' starvin,
They aften groan. often

Alas! what bitter toil an' straining—
But truce with peevish, poor complaining!
Is fortune's fickle *Luna* waning?
E'en let her gang!
Beneath what light she has remaining,
Let 's sing our sang.

My pen I here fling to the door,
And kneel, ye Pow'rs! and warm implore,
'Tho' I should wander *Terra* o'er,
In all her climes,
Grant me but this, I ask no more,
Ay rowth o' rhymes. — always—abundance

'Gie dreeping roasts to countra lairds, — dripping—landed proprietors
Till icicles hing frae their beards; — hang
Gie fine braw claes to fine life-guards, — handsome
And maids of honor;
An' yill an' whisky gie to cairds, — ale—tinkers
Until they sconner. — are nauseated

'A title, Dempster* merits it;
A garter gie to Willie Pitt;
Gie wealth to some be-ledger'd cit,
In cent. per cent.;
But give me real, sterling wit,
And I 'm content.

'While ye are pleas'd to keep me hale,
I 'll sit down o'er my scanty meal,
Be 't water-brose or muslin-kail,†
Wi' cheerfu' face,
As lang 's the Muses dinna fail — don't
To say the grace.'

An anxious e'e I never throws — eye
Behint my lug, or by my nose; — ear
I jouk beneath Misfortune's blows — stoop
As weel 's I may;
Sworn foe to sorrow, care, and prose,
I rhyme away.

O ye douce folk that live by rule, — serious
Grave, tideless-blooded, calm an' cool,

* George Dempster of Dunnichen, then a conspicuous parliamentary orator and Scottish patriot. He commenced his parliamentary career in 1762, closed it in 1790, and died in 1818, at the age of eighty-two.

† 'Water-brose' is a weak porridge made of meal and water without milk or butter. 'Muslin-kail' is broth made without meat.

Compar'd wi' you—O fool! fool! fool!
How much unlike!
Your hearts are just a standing pool,
Your lives, a dyke! wall

Nae hair-brain'd, sentimental traces
In your unletter'd, nameless faces!
In *arioso* trills and graces
Ye never stray;
But *gravissimo*, solemn basses
Ye hum away.

Ye are sae grave, nae doubt ye're wise;
Nae ferly tho' ye do despise wonder
The hairum-scairum, ram-stam boys, heedless
The rattling * squad:
I see ye upward cast your eyes—
Ye ken the road! know

Whilst I—but I shall haud me there— keep
Wi' you I'll scarce gang ony where— go anywhere
Then, Jamie, I shall say nae mair, no more
But quat my sang, quit
Content wi' you to mak a pair,
Whare'er I gang.† go

It is clear from this poem that at the time of its composition Burns had thought of publishing, but had as yet no sufficient reason for doing so. He was, meanwhile, content to rhyme for the enjoyment it affords him. The lively sense of enjoyment expressed in this poem is indeed in striking contrast to the sombre tones of 'Man was made to Mourn' and the verses 'To a Mouse,' probably composed about the same time.

* Variation—'Rambling.'

† James Smith, the son of a Mauchline merchant, and brother of the Jean Smith whose 'wit' was celebrated by Burns, and who married his friend and correspondent, James Candlish, was born in 1765. For a time he was in business as a linen-draper in his native town; but, after 'an affair cognizable by the kirk-session,' started, in partnership with one Miller, a calico-printing manufactory on the banks of the Avon, near Linlithgow. It failed, and Smith migrated to Jamaica, where it is understood he died while still a young man.

CHAPTER VI.

MOSSGIEL—*continued.*

BURNS was now meditating much upon his position, and the possible bearing of his poetical tendencies on his success in life. So much may be discerned in the several epistles he had written to his rhyming acquaintances, Sillar, Lapraik, and Simson, and to his friend Smith, during the course of the present year of flowing inspiration. At length we have the final struggle between the 'world' and his poetic mission, ending in the triumph of that mission, expressed in a poem which is undoubtedly the high-water mark of his inspiration.

THE VISION.

DUAN FIRST.*

The sun had clos'd the winter day,
The curlers quat their roarin play,† — quitted
And hunger'd maukin taen her way, — hungry hare
To kail-yards green, — kitchen-gardens
While faithless snaws ilk step betray — every
Whare she has been.

The thresher's weary flingin-tree, — flail
The lee-lang day had tirèd me; — live-long

* *Duan*, a term of Ossian's for the different divisions of a digressive poem. See his Cath-Loda, vol. 2 of M'Pherson's Translation.—*B.*

† Curling is the Scottish national ice-game, played with curling-stones on ice, and somewhat resembling the game of bowls. The scene on the ice is an animated one; hence 'roaring play.'

And when the day had clos'd his e'e, — eye
Far i' the west,
Ben i' the spence,* right pensivelie,
I gaed to rest. — went

There, lanely by the ingle-cheek, — solitary
I sat and ey'd the spewing reek, — smoke
That fill'd, wi' hoast-provoking smeek, — cough—fume
The auld clay biggin; — building
An' heard the restless rattons squeak — rats
About the riggin. — rafters

All in this mottie, misty clime, — dusty
I backward mus'd on wasted time,
How I had spent my youthfu' prime,
An' done naething,
But stringing blethers up in rhyme, — idle stories, nonsense
For fools to sing.

Had I to guid advice but harket, — listened
I might, by this, hae led a market,
Or strutted in a bank and clarket
My cash-account;
While here, half-mad, half-fed, half-sarket, — half-clad
Is a' th' amount.

I started, mutt'ring 'blockhead! coof!' — fool
An' heav'd on high my wauket loof, — hardened palm
To swear by a' yon starry roof,
Or some rash aith, — oath
That I henceforth would be rhyme-proof
Till my last breath—

When click! the string the snick did draw; — latch
An' jee! the door gaed to the wa';
An' by my ingle-lowe I saw, — fire
Now bleezin bright, — blazing
A tight, outlandish hizzie, braw, — wench—handsome
Come full in sight.

* This was the parlour, or 'ben hoose,' of the farmhouse, and at the end next Mauchline. It contained 'fixed' beds along the back wall.

Ye need na doubt, I held my whisht; kept silence
The infant aith, half-form'd, was crusht; oath
I glowr'd as eerie 's I 'd been dusht,
In some wild glen;*
When sweet, like modest Worth, she blusht,
An' steppèd ben. into the inner room

Green, slender, leaf-clad holly-boughs
Were twisted, gracefu', round her brows;
I took her for some Scottish Muse,
By that same token;
And come to stop those reckless vows,
Would soon been broken.

A 'hairbrain'd, sentimental trace'†
Was strongly markèd in her face;
A wildly-witty, rustic grace
Shone full upon her;
Her eye, ev'n turn'd on empty space,
Beam'd keen with honor.

Down flow'd her robe, a tartan sheen,
Till half a leg was scrimply seen; barely
An' such a leg! my bonie Jean‡
Could only peer it;
Sae straught, sae taper, tight an' clean§— straight
Nane else came near it. none

Her mantle large, of greenish hue,
My gazing wonder chiefly drew;
Deep lights and shades, bold-mingling, threw
A lustre grand;

* 'I stared as full of superstitious fear as if I had been thrown to the ground by meeting a being of the other world in some wild glen.'

† This expression occurs in the 'Epistle to James Smith,' p. 254.

‡ In the first edition the line stood thus:

'And such a leg! my Bess, I ween.'

Indignation at the conduct of Jean induced him to take the compliment from her, and bestow it on Elizabeth Paton. In the first Edinburgh edition, the indignant feeling having subsided, the line was restored as above.

§ 'Clean' is often used in Scotland to describe a handsome figure or limb—clean-cut. Such is the meaning here intended.

And seem'd, to my astonish'd view,
A well-known land.

Here, rivers in the sea were lost;
There, mountains to the skies were toss't;
Here, tumbling billows mark'd the coast,
With surging foam;
There, distant shone Art's lofty boast,
The lordly dome.

Here, Doon pour'd down his far-fetch'd floods;
There, well-fed Irwine stately thuds; Irvine—sounds
Auld hermit Ayr staw thro' his woods, stole
On to the shore;
And many a lesser torrent scuds, runs rapidly
With seeming roar.

Low, in a sandy valley spread,
An ancient borough rear'd her head;*
Still, as in Scottish story read,
She boasts a race
To ev'ry nobler virtue bred,
And polish'd grace.

By stately tow'r, or palace fair,†
Or ruins pendent in the air,
Bold stems of heroes, here and there,
I could discern;
Some seem'd to muse, some seem'd to dare,
With feature stern.

My heart did glowing transport feel,
To see a race heroic‡ wheel,
And brandish round the deep-dyed steel,
In sturdy blows;
While, back-recoiling, seem'd to reel
Their suthron foes. English

* Ayr, whose charter dates from the beginning of the thirteenth century.

† This and the next six stanzas were added in the second edition, for the purpose, apparently, of complimenting Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop and other influential friends of the poet.

‡ The Wallaces.—*B.*

His Country's Saviour,* mark him well!
Bold Richardton's † heroic swell;
The chief, on Sark ‡ who glorious fell
In high command;
And he whom ruthless fates expel
His native land.

There, where a sceptr'd Pictish shade
Stalk'd round his ashes lowly laid, §
I mark'd a martial race, pourtray'd
In colours strong:
Bold, soldier-featur'd, undismay'd,
They strode along. ||

Thro' many a wild, romantic grove, ¶
Near many a hermit-fancied cove
(Fit haunts for friendship or for love,
In musing mood),
An aged Judge, I saw him rove,
Dispensing good.

With deep-struck, reverential awe,
The learnèd Sire and Son I saw: **

* William Wallace.—*B.*

† Adam Wallace of Richariton [Riccarton], cousin to the immortal preserver of Scottish independence.—*B.*

‡ Wallace, Laird of Craigie, who was second in command, under Douglas, Earl of Ormond, at the famous battle on the banks of Sark, fought in 1448. The glorious victory was principally owing to the judicious conduct and intrepid valour of the gallant Laird of Craigie, who died of his wounds after the action.—*B.*

§ Coilus, King of the Picts, from whom the district of Kyle is said to take its name, lies buried, as tradition says, near the family-seat of the Montgomeries of Coilsfield, where his burial-place is still shown.—*B.* The spot pointed out by tradition as the burial-place of Coilus, is a small mound marked by a few trees. It was opened, May 29, 1837, when two sepulchral urns were found, attesting that tradition has been at least correct in describing the spot as a burial-place, though whose ashes these were it would be difficult to say.

|| The Montgomeries of Coilsfield. The younger sons of the family were in the army.

¶ Barskimming, the seat of the Lord Justice-clerk.—*B.* Sir Thomas Miller of Glenlee, who had become Lord Justice-clerk in 1766. In 1788 he became Lord President of the Court of Session. The following year he died, at the age of 82.

** Catrine, the seat of the late Doctor and present Professor Stewart.—*B.* Dr Matthew Stewart (b. 1717, d. 1785), was professor of Mathematics in the university of Edinburgh. His son, Dugald, was born in Edinburgh in 1753, succeeded his father in the mathematical chair in 1775, and ten years later exchanged it for the chair of Moral Philosophy. He retired from active teaching in 1810, and died in Edinburgh in 1828.

To Nature's God, and Nature's law,
They gave their lore;
This, all its source and end to draw,
That, to adore.

Brydon's brave ward* I well could spy,
Beneath old Scotia's smiling eye;
Who call'd on Fame, low standing by,
To hand him on,
Where many a patriot-name on high,
And hero shone.

DUAN SECOND.

With musing-deep, astonish'd stare,
I view'd the heavenly-seeming Fair;
A whispering throb did witness bear
Of kindred sweet,
When with an elder sister's air
She did me greet.

'All hail! my own inspirèd bard!
In me thy native Muse regard;
Nor longer mourn thy fate is hard,
Thus poorly low;
I come to give thee such reward,
As we bestow!

'Know, the great genius of this land
Has many a light aërial band,
Who, all beneath his high command,
Harmoniously,
As arts or arms they understand,
Their labours ply.

* Colonel Fullarton.—*B.* Colonel William Fullarton of Fullarton was born in 1754. Educated at Edinburgh University, he travelled under the care of Patrick Brydone (b. 1741, d. 1818), author of *A Tour in Sicily and Malta.* He entered the army, assisted in raising the regiment known as 'Fullarton's Light Horse,' was member for Ayrshire from 1796 to 1808, and subsequently governor of Trinidad. He died in London in 1808. He was the author of an *Account of Agriculture in Ayrshire*, and a *View of English Interests in India.*

'They Scotia's race among them share:
Some fire the soldier on to dare;
Some rouse the patriot up to bare
Corruption's heart:
Some teach the bard—a darling care—
The tuneful art.

''Mong swelling floods of reeking gore,
They, ardent, kindling spirits pour;
Or, 'mid the venal senate's roar,
They, sightless, stand,
To mend the honest patriot-lore,
And grace the hand.

'And when the bard, or hoary sage,
Charm or instruct the future age,
They bind the wild poetic rage
In energy,
Or point the inconclusive page
Full on the eye.*

'Hence, Fullarton, the brave and young;
Hence, Dempster's zeal-inspirèd† tongue;
Hence, sweet, harmonious Beattie sung‡
His "Minstrel" lays;
Or torc, with noble ardour stung,
The sceptic's bays.

'To lower orders are assign'd
The humbler ranks of human-kind,
The rustic bard, the laboring hind,
The artisan;
All chuse, as various they 're inclin'd,
The various man.

* This stanza does not appear in the Kilmarnock volume: it was added in the second edition.

† In first edition:

'Hence, Dempster's truth-prevailing tongue.'

‡ James Beattie (b. 1735, d. 1803), schoolmaster, poet, and professor of Moral Philosophy in Marischal College, Aberdeen, published *Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth* in 1770, *The Minstrel* between 1771 and 1774, and the *Evidences of Christian Religion* in 1786.

'When yellow waves the heavy grain,
The threat'ning storm some strongly rein;
Some teach to meliorate the plain,
With tillage-skill;
And some instruct the shepherd-train,
Blythe o'er the hill.

'Some hint the lover's harmless wile;
Some grace the maiden's artless smile;
Some soothe the laborer's weary toil
For humble gains,
And make his cottage-scenes beguile
His cares and pains.

'Some, bounded to a district-space,
Explore at large man's infant race,
To mark the embryotic trace
Of rustic bard;
And careful note each opening grace,
A guide and guard.

'Of these am I—Coila my name: *
And this district as mine I claim,
Where once the Campbells,† chiefs of fame,
Held ruling pow'r:
I mark'd thy embryo-tuneful flame,
Thy natal hour.

'With future hope I oft would gaze
Fond, on thy little early ways,
Thy rudely caroll'd, chiming phrase,
In uncouth rhymes;
Fir'd at the simple, artless lays
Of other times.

* The idea of this visionary being is acknowledged by Burns himself to have been taken from the 'Scota' of Alexander Ross (b. 1699, d. 1784), a Mearns poet and schoolmaster, author of a popular pastoral, much admired by Beattie, entitled 'Helenore; or, The Fortunate Shepherdess' (1768).

† The Loudoun branch of the Campbells is here meant. Mossgiel and much of the neighbouring ground was the property of the Earl of Loudoun, for whom Gavin Hamilton acted as factor.

'I saw thee seek the sounding shore,
Delighted with the dashing roar;
Or when the North his fleecy store
Drove thro' the sky,
I saw grim Nature's visage hoar
Struck thy young eye.

'Or when the deep green-mantled earth
Warm cherish'd ev'ry floweret's birth,
And joy and music pouring forth
In ev'ry grove;
I saw thee eye the general mirth
With boundless love.

'When ripen'd fields and azure skies
Call'd forth the reapers' rustling noise,
I saw thee leave their ev'ning joys,
And lonely stalk,
To vent thy bosom's swelling rise
In pensive walk.

'When youthful love, warm-blushing, strong,
Keen-shivering, shot thy nerves along,
Those accents grateful to thy tongue,
Th' adorèd *Name*,
I taught thee how to pour in song,
To soothe thy flame.

'I saw thy pulse's maddening play,
Wild send thee Pleasure's devious way,
Misled by Fancy's meteor-ray,
By passion driven;
But yet the light that led astray
Was light from Heaven.

'I taught thy manners-painting strains,
The loves, the ways of simple swains,
Till now, o'er all my wide domains
Thy fame extends;

And some, the pride of Coila's plains,
Become thy friends.

'Thou canst not learn, nor I can show,
To paint with Thomson's landscape glow;
Or wake the bosom-melting throe,
With Shenstone's art;
Or pour, with Gray, the moving flow
Warm on the heart.

'Yet, all beneath th' unrivall'd rose,
The lowly daisy sweetly blows;
Tho' large the forest's monarch throws
His army-shade,
Yet green the juicy hawthorn grows
Adown the glade.

'Then never murmur nor repine;
Strive in thy humble sphere to shine;
And trust me, not Potosi's mine,
Nor king's regard,
Can give a bliss o'ermatching thine,
A rustic bard.

'To give my counsels all in one,
Thy tuneful flame still careful fan:
Preserve the dignity of Man,
With soul erect;
And trust the Universal Plan
Will all protect.

'And wear thou *this*'—she solemn said,
And bound the holly round my head:
The polish'd leaves and berries red
Did rustling play;
And, like a passing thought, she fled
In light away.*

* A writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, October 1852, expressed his opinion that Burns was indebted for the idea of 'The Vision' to a copy of verses written by the 'melancholy and

The poet is here left reassured and comforted in the all-sufficing grace of the Muse; but no such feeling could long hold sway over one so susceptible as he was to external impressions and so alive to the harassing problems of his destiny. At every recoil from the excitement of the convivial hour, the love-meeting, or the triumphant essay in verse, the deep contemplative melancholy which has been vouched for by so many as the reigning expression of his face, again beset him. Some of the darker moods of his mind are revealed in a poem like 'The Vision,' remarkable as indicating his capacity for writing pure English. In 'A Winter Night,' which he himself described as his 'first attempt in that irregular kind of measure in which many of our finest odes are written,' we see a

pensive Wollaston,' so far back as 1681. 'Wollaston's poem was written on the occasion of his leaving, "with a heavy heart," as he says, his beloved Cambridge.' He describes himself as sitting in his own 'small apartment:'

'As here one day I sate,
Disposed to ruminate,
Deep melancholy did benumb,
With thoughts of what was past and what to come.
* * * *
I thought I saw my Muse appear,
Whose dress declared her haste, whose looks her fear;
A wreath of laurel in her hand she bore,
Such laurel as the god Apollo wore.
The piercing wind had backward combed her hair,
And laid a paint of red upon the fair;
Her gown, which, with celestial colour dyed,
Was with a golden girdle tied,
Through speed a little flowed aside,
And decently disclosed her knee;
When, stopping suddenly, she spoke to me:
"What indigested thought, or rash advice,
Has caused thee to apostatise?
Not my ill-usage, surely, made thee fly
From thy apprenticeship in poetry."

She paused awhile, with joy and weariness oppressed,
And quick reciprocations of her breast,
She spoke again: "What travel and what care
Have I bestowed! my vehicle of air
How often changed in quest of thee!"'

She concludes, like the Muse of Burns, by counselling him to remain true to her and poetry:

'"Suppose the worst, thy passage rough, still I'll be kind,
And breathe upon thy sails behind;
Besides there is a port before:
And every moment thou advancest to the shore,
Where virtuous souls shall better usage find."
Concern and agitation of my head
Waked me; and with the light the phantom fled.'

For suppressed stanzas of 'The Vision,' see Appendix, No. VI.

reflection of Gray and Collins, as in the 'Epistles' we see a reflection of Ramsay.

A WINTER NIGHT.

Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
That bide the pelting of the pityless storm!
How shall your houseless heads, and unfed sides,
Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these?—SHAKESPEARE.

When biting Boreas, fell and doure, — keen—stern
Sharp shivers thro' the leafless bow'r;
When Phœbus gies a short-liv'd glow'r, — stare
Far south the lift, — sky
Dim-dark'ning thro' the flaky show'r,
Or whirling drift:

Ae night the storm the steeples rocked, — one
Poor Labour sweet in sleep was locked,
While burns, wi' snawy wreaths up-choked, — rivulets
Wild-eddying swirl;
Or, thro' the mining outlet bocked, — belched
Down headlong hurl:

List'ning the doors an' winnocks rattle, — windows
I thought me on the ourie cattle, — shivering
Or silly sheep, wha bide this brattle — helpless—endure —pelting
O' winter war,
And thro' the drift, deep-lairing, sprattle — sinking deep —scramble
Beneath a scaur. — cliff

Ilk happing bird,—wee, helpless thing! — hopping
That, in the merry months o' spring,
Delighted me to hear thee sing,
What comes o' thee?
Whare wilt thou cow'r thy chittering wing,
An' close thy e'e? — eye

Ev'n you, on murd'ring errands toil'd,
Lone from your savage homes exil'd,
The blood-stain'd roost, and sheep-cote spoil'd,
My heart forgets,
While pityless the tempest wild
Sore on you beats.

Now Phœbe, in her midnight reign, the moon, a feminine correlative of Phœbus
Dark-muffl'd, view'd the dreary plain;
Still crouding thoughts, a pensive train,
Rose in my soul,
When on my ear this plaintive strain,
Slow-solemn, stole—

'Blow, blow, ye winds, with heavier gust!
And freeze, thou bitter-biting frost!
Descend, ye chilly, smothering snows!
Not all your rage, as now united, shows
More hard unkindness unrelenting,
Vengeful malice, unrepenting,
Than heaven-illumin'd Man on brother Man bestows!*

'See stern Oppression's iron grip,
Or mad Ambition's gory hand,
Sending, like blood-hounds from the slip,
Woe, Want, and Murder o'er a land!
Ev'n in the peaceful rural vale,
Truth, weeping, tells the mournful tale,
How pamper'd Luxury, Flatt'ry by her side,
The parasite empoisoning her ear,
With all the servile wretches in the rear,
Looks o'er proud Property, extended wide;
And eyes the simple, rustic hind,
Whose toil upholds the glitt'ring show—

* Blow, blow, thou winter wind;
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude. . . .
Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky;
Thou dost not bite so nigh
As benefits forgot.
—SHAKESPEARE, *As You Like It*, Act II., Scene 7.

A creature of another kind,
Some coarser substance, unrefin'd—
Plac'd for her lordly use thus far, thus vile, below!

'Where, where is Love's fond, tender throe,
With lordly Honor's lofty brow,
The pow'rs you proudly own?
Is there, beneath Love's noble name,
Can harbour, dark, the selfish aim,
To bless himself alone!
Mark maiden-innocence a prey
To love-pretending snares:
This boasted Honor turns away,
Shunning soft Pity's rising sway,
Regardless of the tears and unavailing pray'rs!
Perhaps this hour, in Misery's squalid nest,
She strains your infant to her joyless breast,
And with a mother's fears shrinks at the rocking blast!

'Oh ye! who, sunk in beds of down,
Feel not a want but what yourselves create,
Think, for a moment, on his wretched fate,
Whom friends and fortune quite disown!
Ill-satisfy'd keen nature's clamorous call,
Stretch'd on his straw, he lays himself to sleep;
While thro' the ragged roof and chinky wall,
Chill, o'er his slumbers, piles the drifty heap!
Think on the dungeon's grim confine,
Where Guilt and poor Misfortune pine!
Guilt, erring man, relenting view,
But shall thy legal rage pursue
The wretch, already crushèd low
By cruel Fortune's undeservèd blow?
Affliction's sons are brothers in distress;
A brother to relieve, how exquisite the bliss!'

I heard nae mair, for Chanticleer — no more
Shook off the pouthery snaw, — powdery snow

And hail'd the morning with a cheer,
A cottage-rousing craw. crow

But deep this truth impress'd my mind—
Thro' all His works abroad,
The heart benevolent and kind
The most resembles God.

During the autumn of 1785, Burns had an opportunity of making the acquaintance of Miss Margaret (usually called, in old Scottish style, Miss Peggy) Kennedy, the daughter of Robert Kennedy of Daljarrock, in the parish of Colmonell, and a relative of Mrs Gavin Hamilton. The poet met her when she was on a visit to Mauchline, and being much struck with her beauty and *esprit*—she was then but nineteen years of age—he made her the subject of a song, which he sent to her enclosed in a letter:

TO MISS MARGARET KENNEDY.

MADAM—Permit me to present you with the enclosed song, as a small though grateful tribute for the honor of your acquaintance. I have in these verses attempted some faint sketches of your portrait in the unembellished, simple manner of descriptive TRUTH. Flattery, I leave to your LOVERS, whose exaggerating fancies may make them imagine you are still nearer perfection than you really are.

Poets, Madam, of all mankind, feel most forcibly the powers of BEAUTY; as, if they are really POETS of Nature's making, their feelings must be finer, and their taste more delicate than most of the world. In the cheerful bloom of SPRING, or the pensive mildness of AUTUMN, the grandeur of SUMMER, or the hoary majesty of WINTER, the poet feels a charm unknown to the most of his species: even the sight of a fine flower, or the company of a fine woman (by far the finest part of God's works below), have sensations for the poetic heart that the HERD of men are strangers to. On this last account, Madam, I am, as in many other things, indebted to Mr Hamilton's kindness in introducing me to you. Your lovers may view you with a wish, I look on you with pleasure; their hearts, in your presence, may glow with desire, mine rises with admiration.

That the arrows of misfortune, however they should, as incident to humanity, glance a slight wound, may never reach your heart—that the snares of villainy may never beset you in the road of life—that

INNOCENCE may hand you by the path of HONOR to the dwelling of PEACE—is the sincere wish of him who has the honor to be, &c.

R. B.

Burns's hopes for the future of Miss Kennedy were not destined to be fulfilled. The year before they met, she had attracted the attention of Captain (afterwards Colonel) Andrew M'Doual, younger of Logan, in the county of Wigtown, which, although only a young man of twenty-five, he then represented in Parliament. She entered into a secret connection with him, which resulted in her giving birth to a daughter in 1794. It seems, however, to be beyond doubt that Miss Kennedy believed herself to be married to her seducer. After the birth of her child, she implored M'Doual, who had then succeeded to his father's estates, to avow their marriage. He refused, denied that he was the father of her child, and married the daughter of a Dumfriesshire laird. On Miss Kennedy's behalf there was then raised in court an action of declarator of marriage, with the alternative conclusion of damages for seduction. She died in 1795, before the case had proceeded far. In 1798, the Consistorial Court declared for marriage and the legitimacy of Miss Kennedy's child. This decision was, however, reversed on appeal, by the Court of Session, which nevertheless allowed £3000 by way of damages to the deceased mother and alimentary provision to the daughter, who subsequently contracted a good marriage.

The song was published in Johnson's *Museum* in 1787, under the title

YOUNG PEGGY.

TUNE—*Last time I came o'er the Muir.*

Young Peggy blooms our boniest lass,
  Her blush is like the morning,
The rosy dawn, the springing grass,
  With early gems adorning:
Her eyes outshine the radiant beams
  That gild the passing shower,
And glitter o'er the crystal streams,
  And cheer each fresh'ning flower.

Her lips more than the cherries bright,
A richer dye has graced them,
They charm th' admiring gazer's sight,
And sweetly tempt to taste them;
Her smile is as the ev'ning mild,
When feather'd pairs are courting,
And little lambkins wanton wild,
In playful bands disporting.

Were Fortune lovely Peggy's foe,
Such sweetness would relent her,
As blooming Spring unbends the brow
Of surly, savage Winter.
Detraction's eye no aim can gain
Her winning pow'rs to lessen;
And fretful Envy grins in vain
The poison'd tooth to fasten.

Ye Pow'rs of Honor, Love, and Truth,
From ev'ry ill defend her;
Inspire the highly-favor'd youth
The destinies intend her:
Still fan the sweet connubial flame
Responsive in each bosom;
And bless the dear parental name
With many a filial blossom.*

We now see Burns in a different mood. He was, as has been emphatically declared by Gilbert, no lover of drink, but his social spirit had invested it with many interesting associations in his mind. The following poem on the subject seems to have been suggested by Fergusson's 'Caller Water:'

* 'Burns met Miss Kennedy at Mr Hamilton's, where she lived some time. My mother remembers a conversation between Robert and Gilbert, on the *har'st rig*, respecting the young lady and the song which had been written upon her. Gilbert said he did not think quite so much of her. Robert said she had a great deal of wit. One Sarah Weir, who was often about Mr Hamilton's, working, and knew them all well, was shearing on the same ridge with my mother. At the poet's remark about the wit of Miss Kennedy, Sarah stopped and asked him if it was not of a shallow kind. The bard only replied with a look of contempt, which greatly amused my mother at the time, and which still remains imprinted on her memory.'—*Letter of Isabella Begg*, October 1850.

SCOTCH DRINK.

Gie him strong drink until he wink,
That 's sinking in despair;
An' liquor guid to fire his bluid,
That 's prest wi' grief an' care:
There let him bowse, an' deep carouse,
Wi' bumpers flowing o'er,
Till he forgets his loves or debts,
An' minds his griefs no more.
SOLOMON'S PROVERBS, xxxi. 6, 7.

Let other poets raise a frácas — make a to-do
'Bout vines, an' wines, an' drucken Bacchus, — drunken
An' crabbet names an' stories wrack us, — uncouth—torture
An' grate our lug: — ear
I sing the juice Scotch bere can mak us, — barley
In glass or jug.

O thou, my muse! guid auld Scotch drink!
Whether thro' wimplin worms thou jink, — winding—steal
Or, richly brown, ream owre the brink,
In glorious faem, — foam
Inspire me, till I lisp an' wink,
To sing thy name!

Let husky wheat the haughs adorn, — valleys
An' aits set up their awnie horn, — oats—bearded
An' pease and beans, at e'en or morn,
Perfume the plain:
Leeze me on thee, John Barleycorn, — Commend me to
Thou king o' grain!

On thee aft Scotland chows her cood, — oft—chews—cud
In souple scones, the wale o' food! — supple, flat cakes—choice
Or tumblin in the boiling flood
Wi' kail an' beef; — broth
But when thou pours thy strong heart's blood,
There thou shines chief.

Food fills the wame, an' keeps us leevin; stomach—living
Tho' life 's a gift no worth receivin,
When heavy-dragg'd wi' pine an' grievin;
But oil'd by thee,
The wheels o' life gae down-hill, scrievin, go—gliding smoothly
Wi' rattlin glee.

Thou clears the head o' doited Lear; confused Learning
Thou cheers the heart o' drooping Care;
Thou strings the nerves o' Labor sair, severe
At 's weary toil;
Thou ev'n brightens dark Despair
Wi' gloomy smile.

Aft, clad in massy siller weed, often
Wi' gentles thou erects thy head;*
Yet, humbly kind in time o' need,
The poor man's wine;
His wee drap parritch, or his bread, little drop of porridge
Thou kitchens fine.† givest relish to

Thou art the life o' public haunts;
But thee, what were our fairs and rants? Without—frolics
Ev'n godly meetings o' the saunts, saints
By thee inspir'd,
When, gaping, they besiege the tents,‡
Are doubly fir'd.

That merry night we get the corn in,
O sweetly, then, thou reams the horn in!
Or reekin on a New-year mornin smoking hot
In cog or bicker, wooden vessels
An' just a wee drap sp'ritual burn in, whisky
An' gusty sucker! tasty sugar

* As ale in silver mugs, at the tables of the wealthy.
† Brisk small-beer used to be a favourite relish to porridge in Scotland.
‡ Sitting round the movable pulpits erected in the open air at parochial celebrations of the communion.—See notes to 'The Holy Fair.'

When Vulcan gies his bellows breath,
An' ploughmen gather wi' their graith, implements
O rare! to see thee fizz an' freath froth
I' th' lugget caup! eared cup, or quaich
Then Burnewin comes on like death Blacksmith
At ev'ry chaup. blow

Nae mercy, then, for airn or steel; iron
The brawnie, bainie, ploughman chiel, stout—bony—fellow
Brings hard owrehip, wi' sturdy wheel,
The strong forehammer,
Till block an' studdie ring an' reel, stithy, anvil
Wi' dinsome clamour.

When skirlin weanies see the light, squalling infants
Thou maks the gossips clatter bright, makes
How fumblin cuifs their dearies slight; incapables
Wae worth the name!*
Nae howdie gets a social night, midwife
Or plack frae them. coin

When neibors anger at a plea, neighbours get angry
An' just as wud as wud can be, mad
How easy can the barley-brie malt liquor
Cement the quarrel!
It 's aye the cheapest lawyer's fee,
To taste the barrel.

Alake! that e'er my muse has reason,
To wyte my countrymen wi' treason! lame
But mony daily weet their weason wet—throat
Wi' liquors nice,
An' hardly, in a winter season,
E'er spier her price. ask

* This and the two following lines run in the edition of 1786:
'Wae worth them for 't!
While healths gae round to him wha, *tight*,
Gies famous sport.'

Wae worth that brandy, burnin trash!
Fell source o' mony a pain an' brash! sickness
Twins mony a poor, doylt, drucken hash, deprives—wearied fellow
O' half his days;
An' sends, beside, auld Scotland's cash
To her warst faes. worst foes

Ye Scots, wha wish auld Scotland well!
Ye chief, to you my tale I tell,
Poor, plackless devils like mysel! penniless
It sets you ill,
Wi' bitter, dearthfu' wines to mell, meddle
Or foreign gill.

May gravels round his blather wrench,
An' gouts torment him, inch by inch,
Wha twists his gruntle wi' a glunch mouth—grumble
O' sour disdain,
Out owre a glass o' whisky-punch
Wi' honest men!

O whisky! soul o' plays an' pranks!
Accept a bardie's gratefu' thanks!*
When wanting thee, what tuneless cranks
Are my poor verses!
Thou comes—they rattle i' their ranks
At ither's ——!

Thee, Ferintosh! O sadly lost!
Scotland, lament frae coast to coast!
Now colic grips, an' barkin hoast cough
May kill us a';
For loyal Forbes' charter'd boast
Is ta'en awa!†

* 'Humble thanks' in 1794 edition.

† For services and expenses on the public account at the Revolution, Forbes of Culloden was empowered, by an act of the Scottish Parliament in 1690, to distil whisky on his barony of Ferintosh, in Cromartyshire, free of duty. This inconsiderately conferred privilege in time became the source of a great revenue to the family; and *Ferintosh* was at length recognised as something like a synonym for whisky, so much of it was there distilled. By the act of 1785 dealing with the Scotch distilleries this privilege was declared to

Thae curst horse-leeches o' th' Excise,
Wha mak the whisky stells their prize! stills
Haud up thy han', Deil! ance, twice, thrice!
There, seize the blinkers!
An' bake them up in brunstane pies brimstone
For poor d—d drinkers.

Fortune! if thou 'll but gie me still
Hale breeks, a scone, an' whisky gill, whole (not ragged) clothes
An' rowth o' rhyme to rave at will, abundance
Tak a' the rest,
An' deal 't about as thy blind skill
Directs thee best.

The subject here dealt with is taken up in another poem of even greater power. Towards the close of the year 1785, loud complaints were made by the Scottish distillers as to the vexatious and oppressive manner in which the Excise laws were enforced at their establishments—such rigour, they said, being exercised at the instigation of the London distillers, who looked with jealousy on the success of their northern brethren. So great was the severity of the Excise, that many distillers were obliged to abandon the trade, and the price of barley was beginning to be affected. Illicit distillation was also found to be alarmingly on the increase. In consequence of the earnest remonstrances of the distillers, backed by the county gentlemen, an act was passed in the session of 1786 (alluded to by the poet), whereby the duties on low wines, spirits, &c., were discontinued, and an annual tax imposed on stills, according to their capacity. This act gave general satisfaction. It seems to have been during the general outcry against

be abolished, the Lords of the Treasury being left to make such compensation to the existing Mr Forbes as should be deemed just, or, should they fail to make a satisfactory arrangement, the case was to be decided by a jury before the Scottish Court of Exchequer. The Lords failing to satisfy Mr Forbes, the case was accordingly tried by a jury, November 29, 1785, when it was shown by Mr Henry Erskine, the plaintiff's counsel, that the privilege could be made to yield no less than £7000 a year to the family, though the actual annual gain from it, at an average of the last thirteen years, was but a little more than £1000. He further proved that, while the right was an undoubted piece of property which nothing could justly take away, the family had not failed to deserve it, as they had ever continued useful and loyal servants to the government, Mr Duncan Forbes, the late Lord President, in particular, having spent no less than £20,000 of his private fortune in suppressing the rebellion of 1745–6. The jury surprised the Lords of the Treasury by decreeing the sum of £21,580 for 'loyal Forbes' charter'd boast.'

fiscal oppression at the end of 1785, or beginning of 1786, that Burns composed

THE AUTHOR'S EARNEST CRY AND PRAYER

TO THE SCOTCH REPRESENTATIVES IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.*

Dearest of distillation! last and best—
How art thou lost!—PARODY ON MILTON.

Ye Irish lords, ye knights an' squires,
Wha represent our brughs an' shires, — burghs
An' doucely manage our affairs — honestly
In parliament,
To you a simple poet's † pray'rs
Are humbly sent.

Alas! my roupet muse is hearse! — husky—hoarse
Your Honors' hearts wi' grief 'twad pierce, — it would
To see her sittin on her ——
Low i' the dust,
And scriechin out prosaic verse, — screeching
An' like to brust! — burst

Tell them wha hae the chief direction,
Scotland an' me's in great affliction,
E'er sin' they laid that curst restriction — since
On aqua-vitæ;
An' rouse them up to strong conviction,
An' move their pity.

Stand forth an' tell yon Premier youth ‡
The honest, open, naked truth:
Tell him o' mine an' Scotland's drouth, — thirst
His servants humble:
The muckle devil blaw ye south, — great—blow
If ye dissemble!

* This was written before the Act anent the Scotch distilleries, of session 1786, for which Scotland and the Author return their most grateful thanks.—*B.*

† 'Bardie's' in editions prior to 1794.

‡ William Pitt became Premier at twenty-four, in December 1783.

Does ony great man glunch an' gloom? grumble
Speak out, an' never fash your thumb! trouble yourself
Let posts an' pensions sink or soom swim
Wi' them wha grant them;
If honestly they canna come, cannot
Far better want them.

In gath'rin votes you were na slack;
Now stand as tightly by your tack:
Ne'er claw your lug, an' fidge your back, scratch your ear —shrug
An' hum an' haw;
But raise your arm, an' tell your crack speech
Before them a'.

Paint Scotland greetin owre her thrissle; weeping—thistle
Her mutchkin stowp as toom 's a whissle; empty
An' d—mn'd excisemen in a bussle,
Seizin a stell, still
Triumphant, crushin 't like a mussel,
Or limpet shell!

Then, on the tither hand, present her— other
A blackguard smuggler right behint her,
An' cheek-for-chow, a chuffie vintner cheek-by-jowl —fat-faced
Colleaguing join,
Pickin' her pouch as bare as winter pocket
Of a' kind coin.

Is there, that bears the name o' Scot,
But feels his heart's bluid rising hot, blood
To see his poor auld mither's pot mother's
Thus dung in staves, driven
An' plunder'd o' her hindmost groat,
By gallows knaves?

Alas! I 'm but a nameless wight,
Trode i' the mire out o' sight!

But could I like Montgomeries fight,*
Or gab like Boswell,† make speeches
There 's some sark-necks I wad draw tight, shirt
An' tie some hose well.

God bless your Honors! can ye see 't—
The kind, auld, cantie carlin greet, cheerful old wife—cry
An' no get warmly to your feet, not—in wrath
An' gar them hear it, make
An' tell them wi' a patriot-heat,
Ye winna bear it? won't

Some o' you nicely ken the laws,
To round the period an' pause,
An' wi' rhetòric clause on clause
To mak harangues; make
Then echo thro' Saint Stephen's wa's walls
Auld Scotland's wrangs.

Dempster,‡ a true blue Scot I 'se warran;
Thee, aith-detesting, chaste Kilkerran;§ oath
An' that glib-gabbet Highland baron, ready-tongued
The Laird o' Graham;‖
An' ane, a chap that 's d—mn'd auldfarran, fellow—sagacious
Dundas his name: ¶

* The poet here alludes to the Montgomeries of Coilsfield, in particular to Hugh, who, born in 1740, entered the army, and served in America. He represented Ayrshire in parliament from 1784 to 1789, and subsequently in 1796. That year he became (twelfth) Earl of Eglinton, in succession to his cousin Archibald. He died in 1819.

† James Boswell of Auchinleck (b. 1740, d. 1795), the biographer of Johnson. He had succeeded to Auchinleck in 1782, and frequently spoke at Ayrshire county meetings.

‡ George Dempster of Dunnichen. See the 'Epistle to James Smith' (p. 258), and 'The Vision' (p. 261).

§ Sir Adam Fergusson of Kilkerran, born about 1732; died in 1813. He represented the county of Ayr for eighteen years in parliament, and the city of Edinburgh for four.

‖ The Marquis of Graham, eldest son of the Duke of Montrose, then member for Bedwin, in Wiltshire. He held the offices of President of the Board of Trade, Postmaster-General, and Paymaster of the Forces, in Pitt's administration. He succeeded his father as Duke in 1790, and died in 1836, at the age of 81.

¶ The Right Hon. Henry Dundas (b. 1742, d. 1811), Treasurer of the Navy, and M.P. (1774–1787) for Edinburghshire. Created Viscount Melville in 1802.

Erskine,* a spunkie Norland billie; — spirited Northern young fellow
True Campbells, Frederick † and Ilay; ‡
An' Livistone, the bauld Sir Willie; § — bold
An' mony ithers, — others
Whom auld Demosthenes or Tully
Might own for brithers.

See, sodger Hugh, my watchman stented, — assigned (parliamentary) representative
If poets e'er are represented;
I ken if that your sword were wanted,
Ye 'd lend a hand;
But when there 's ought to say anent it,
Ye 're at a stand. ||

Arouse, my boys! exert your mettle,
To get auld Scotland back her kettle;
Or faith! I 'll wad my new pleugh-pettle, — pledge—plough-staff
Ye 'll see 't or lang, — before
She 'll teach you, wi' a reekin whittle, — knife smoking with blood
Anither sang.

This while she 's been in crankous mood, — fretful
Her lost Militia¶ fir'd her bluid;
(Deil nor they never mair do guid,
Play'd her that pliskie!) — trick
An' now she 's like to rin red-wud — run stark mad
About her whisky.

* Thomas Erskine (b. 1750, d. 1823), third son of Henry-David, tenth Earl of Buchan, and younger brother of Henry Erskine, who subsequently became a friend and correspondent of Burns. He was called to the English bar in 1778, was returned for Portsmouth in 1783, and became Lord Chancellor in 1806.

† Lord Frederick Campbell (b. 1736, d. 1816), second brother of the Duke of Argyll, Lord Clerk-Register for Scotland, and M.P. for the county of Argyll from 1780 to 1799.

‡ Sir Ilay Campbell (b. 1734, d. 1823), eldest son of Archibald Campbell of Succoth, Lord Advocate for Scotland, representative of the Glasgow group of burghs from 1784 to 1789, when he succeeded Sir Thomas Millar as Lord President of the Court of Session.

§ Sir William Augustus Cunninghame of Milncraig in Ayrshire, and of Livingstone in Linlithgowshire, which he represented from 1774 to 1790. He died in 1828.

|| This stanza, alluding to the imperfect elocution of Hugh Montgomerie, was omitted from the poem in all editions published by the author.

¶ A militia bill for Scotland was introduced into parliament in 1782, when the country was in danger of French and Dutch invasion. The Rockingham ministry, perhaps taking alarm at the attitude of the Irish militia, proposed a clause at the third reading for facilitating enlistment from the designed militia into the army; and the bill, being declined in this form by Dempster and other patriots, was lost.

An' L—d! if ance they pit her till 't, to it
Her tartan petticoat she 'll kilt,
An' durk an' pistol at her belt, dirk
She 'll tak the streets,
An' rin her whittle to the hilt, run—knife
I' the first she meets!

For G—d-sake, sirs! then speak her fair,
An' straik her cannie wi' the hair, stroke—gently, and with the grain
An' to the muckle house repair, House of Commons
Wi' instant speed,
An' strive, wi' a' your wit an' lear, learning
To get remead. remedy

Yon ill-tongu'd tinkler, Charlie Fox,
May taunt you wi' his jeers an' mocks;
But gie him 't het, my hearty cocks! hot
E'en cow the cadie! subdue—fellow
An' send him to his dicing box
An' sportin lady.

Tell yon guid bluid o' auld Boconnock's,*
I 'll be his debt twa mashlum bonnocks,†
An' drink his health in auld Nanse Tinnock's‡
Nine times a-week,
If he some scheme, like tea an' winnocks,§
Wad kindly seek. would

Could he some commutation broach,
I 'll pledge my aith in guid braid Scotch, good broad
He needna fear their foul reproach
Nor erudition,

* William Pitt's father, the Earl of Chatham, was the second son of Robert Pitt of Boconnock, in the county of Cornwall.

† Scones made of a mixture of oatmeal, pease or bean flour, and barley-flour.

‡ A worthy old hostess of the Author's in Mauchline, where he sometimes studies politics over a glass of gude auld 'Scotch Drink.'—*B.* Nanse's story was different. On seeing the poem, she declared that the author had never been but once or twice in her house. A portrait of her was taken by Brooks in 1799, and has been engraved.

§ Pitt, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, had gained some credit by a measure introduced in 1784 for preventing smuggling of tea by reducing the duty, the revenue being compensated by a tax on windows.

Yon mixtie-maxtie, queer hotch-potch, confusedly mixed
The 'Coalition.' *

Auld Scotland has a raucle tongue; rough
She 's just a devil wi' a rung; bludgeon
An' if she promise auld or young
To tak their part,
Tho' by the neck she should be strung,
She 'll no desert.

And now, ye chosen Five-and-Forty, †
May still your mither's heart support ye;
Then, tho' a minister grow dorty, saucy
An' kick your place,
Ye 'll snap your fingers, poor an' hearty,
Before his face.

God bless your Honors, a' your days,
Wi' sowps o' kail and brats o' claise, ‡ spoonfuls of broth —cloth
In spite o' a' the thievish kaes, jackdaws
That haunt St Jamie's!
Your humble poet sings an' prays,
While Rab his name is.

POSTSCRIPT.

Let half-starv'd slaves in warmer skies
See future wines, rich-clust'ring, rise;
Their lot auld Scotland ne'er envies,
But, blythe and frisky,
She eyes her freeborn, martial boys
Tak aff their whisky.

What tho' their Phœbus kinder warms, sun
While fragrance blooms and beauty charms,

* The 'Coalition ministry,' which included North and Fox, was in power from April to December 1783.

† The representation of Scotland in the Imperial Parliament at this time consisted of forty-five members.

‡ 'Brats' means here coarse cloth or rags. This line is a variant on the common prayer for 'food and raiment.'

When wretches range, in famish'd swarms,
The scented groves;
Or, hounded forth, dishonor arms
In hungry droves!

Their gun 's a burden on their shouther;
They downa bide the stink o' powther; cannot stand—smell
Their bauldest thought 's a hank'ring swither boldest—uncertainty
To stand or rin,
Till skelp—a shot—they 're aff, a' throw'ther, quick!—off—pell-mell
To save their skin.

But bring a Scotsman frae his hill,
Clap in his cheek a Highland gill,
Say, such is royal George's will,
An' there 's the foe!
He has nae thought but how to kill no
Twa at a blow.

Nae cauld, faint-hearted doubtings tease him; cold
Death comes, wi' fearless eye he sees him;
Wi' bluidy hand a welcome gies him;
An' when he fa's, falls
His latest draught o' breathin lea'es him leaves
In faint huzzas.

Sages their solemn een may steek, eyes—close
An' raise a philosophic reek, mist
An' physically causes seek,
In clime an' season;
But tell me whisky's name in Greek,
I 'll tell the reason.

Scotland, my auld, respected mither! mother
Tho' whiles ye moistify your leather, at times—moisten
Till whare ye sit, on craps o' heather, crops
Ye tine your dam; lose

Freedom and whisky gang thegither ! go together
Tak aff your dram ! *

To the early part of 1786 may be referred a poem in which Burns once more exhibits his tenderness for the lower animals. He here assumes a fictitious character—that of an old farmer :

THE AULD FARMER'S NEW-YEAR MORNING SALUTATION TO HIS AULD MARE, MAGGIE,

ON GIVING HER THE ACCUSTOMED RIPP OF CORN TO HANSEL IN THE NEW-YEAR.

A guid New-year I wish thee, Maggie !
Hae, there 's a ripp to thy auld baggie : handful—stomach
Tho' thou 's howe-backit now, an' knaggie, hollow-backed —bony
I 've seen the day
Thou could hae gaen like ony staggie, colt
Out-owre the lay. lea

Tho' now thou 's dowie, stiff an' crazy, drooping
An' thy auld hide as white 's a daisie,
I 've seen thee dappl't, sleek an' glaizie,
A bonie gray :
He should been tight that daur't to raize thee, dared—excite
Ance in a day.

Thou ance was i' the foremost rank,
A filly buirdly, steeve an' swank ; strong—firm—stately
An' set weel down a shapely shank,
As e'er tread yird ; earth
An' could hae flown out-owre a stank, ditch
Like ony bird.

It 's now some nine-an'-twenty year,
Sin' thou was my guidfather's meere ; mare

* Altered, probably by Mr Fraser Tytler, in 1794, to :

' Till when ye speak, ye aiblins blether, perhaps talk nonsense
Yet deil mak matter !
Freedom and whisky gang thegither,
Tak aff your whitter.' a hearty draught of liquor

The alteration has been universally disregarded.

A guid New-Year I wish thee, Maggie
Hae, there's a ripp to thy auld baggie.

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He gied me thee, o' tocher clear, gave—dowry
An' fifty mark ;*
Tho' it was sma', 'twas weel-won gear, well-earned money
An' thou was stark. strong

When first I gaed to woo my Jenny,
Ye then was trottin wi' your minnie : mother
Tho' ye was trickie, slee, an' funnie, sly
Ye ne'er was donsie ; mischievous
But hamely, tawie,† quiet, an' cannie,
An' unco sonsie. very plump

That day, ye pranc'd wi' muckle pride, great
When ye bure hame my bonie bride : bore
An' sweet an' gracefu' she did ride,
Wi' maiden air !
Kyle-Stewart I could bragget wide, could have bragged, challenged
For sic a pair.

Tho' now ye dow but hoyte and hobble, can—limp
An' wintle like a saumont-coble, twist and rock—salmon-boat
That day, ye was a jinker noble, runner
For heels an' win' ! wind
An' ran them till they a' did wauble, reel
Far, far behin' !

When thou an' I were young an' skiegh, high-mettled
An' stable-meals at fairs were driegh, tedious
How thou wad prance, an' snore, an' skriegh, whinny
An' tak the road !
Town's bodies ran, an' stood abiegh, out of the way
An' ca't thee mad. called

When thou was corn't, an' I was mellow, made comfortable by drink
We took the road ay like a swallow :
At brooses‡ thou had ne'er a fellow,
For pith an' speed ;

* A Scottish coin of the value of 13s. 4d.
† That allows itself peaceably to be handled.
‡ A race at a marriage is styled a *broose*.

But ev'ry tail thou pay't them hollow,
Whare'er thou gaed.

The sma', droop-rumpl't, hunter cattle — drooping at the crupper
Might aiblins waur't thee for a brattle; — perhaps beat—short race
But sax Scotch mile, thou try't their mettle, — six
An' gar't them whaizle: — made—wheeze
Nae whip nor spur, but just a wattle — switch
O' saugh or hazle. — willow

Thou was a noble 'fittie-lan','*
As e'er in tug or tow was drawn!
Aft thee an' I, in aught hours' gaun, — eight hours' work
On guid March-weather,
Hae turn'd sax rood beside our han', — six roods
For days thegither.

Thou never brainge't, an' fetch't, an' flisket; — fretted—raged—kicked
But thy auld tail thou wad hae whisket, — lashed
An' spread abreed thy weel-fill'd brisket, — breast
Wi' pith an' power;
Till sprittie knowes wad rair't an' risket,
An' slypet owre.†

When frosts lay lang, an' snaws were deep, — long
An' threaten'd labour back to keep,
I gied thy cog a wee bit heap‡
Aboon the timmer:
I ken'd my Maggie wad na sleep
For that, or simmer. — before summer

In cart or car thou never reestet; — stood still
The steyest brae thou wad hae fac't it; — steepest hill
Thou never lap, an' stenned, an' breastet, — leaped—reared
Then stood to blaw;

* The near horse of the hindmost pair in the plough.

† 'Till hillocks, where the earth was full of tough-rooted plants, would have given forth a cracking sound, and the clods fallen gently over.'

‡ Filled thy measure of corn to overflowing.

But just thy step a wee thing hastet, — a little—quickened
Thou snoov't awa. — pushed on quietly

My 'plough' is now thy bairn-time a',
Four gallant brutes as e'er did draw; *
Forbye sax mae I 've sell't awa, — Besides six more
That thou has nurst:
They drew me threttteen pund an' twa, — thirteen
The vera warst.

Mony a sair daurg we twa hae wrought, — day's work
An' wi' the weary warl' fought! — world
An' mony an anxious day, I thought
We wad be beat!
Yet here to crazy age we 're brought,
Wi' something yet.

An' think na', my auld trusty servan',
That now perhaps thou 's less deservin,
An' thy auld days may end in starvin,
For my last fow, — bushel
A heapet stimpart,† I 'll reserve ane
Laid by for you.

We 've worn to crazy years thegither;
We 'll toyte about wi' ane anither; — move
Wi' tentie care I 'll flit thy tether — heedful
To some hain'd rig, — reserved piece of ground
Whare ye may nobly rax your leather, — stretch
Wi' sma fatigue.

'The tale of the "Twa Dogs," says Gilbert Burns, 'was composed after the resolution of publishing was nearly taken. Robert had a dog, which he called Luath, that was a great favourite. The dog had been killed by the wanton cruelty of some person, the

* Meaning—all the four horses now working in my plough are thy progeny.
† A measure—the eighth part of a bushel.

night before my father's death. Robert said to me that he should like to confer such immortality as he could bestow upon his old friend Luath, and that he had a great mind to introduce something into the book under the title of Stanzas to the Memory of a Quadruped Friend; but this plan was given up for the poem as it now stands. Cæsar was merely the creature of the poet's imagination, created for the purpose of holding chat with his favourite Luath.'

THE TWA DOGS:

A TALE.

'Twas in that place o' Scotland's isle,
That bears the name o' auld 'King Coil,'*
Upon a bonie day in June,
When wearing thro' the afternoon,
Twa dogs, that were na thrang at hame, — busy
Forgather'd ance upon a time. — Met together

The first I 'll name, they ca'd him 'Cæsar,'
Was keepet for his Honor's pleasure:
His hair, his size, his mouth, his lugs, — ears
Shew'd he was nane o' Scotland's dogs;
But whalpet some place far abroad, — whelped
Whare sailors gang to fish for cod. — i.e. Newfoundland

His lockèd, letter'd, braw brass-collar
Shew'd him the gentleman an' scholar;
But though he was o' high degree,
The fient a pride, nae pride had he; — not the least pride
But wad hae spent an hour caressin,
Ev'n wi' a tinkler-gipsey's messan: — cur
At kirk or market, mill or smiddie, — smithy
Nae tawted tyke, tho' e'er sae duddie, — matted-haired dog —unkempt
But he wad stand, as glad to see him,
An' stroan'd on stanes an' hillocks wi' him. — stones

* 'Kyle' the name of the middle district of Ayrshire, was traditionally said to derive its name from Coilus, 'king of the Picts,' or 'Old King Cole'—a mere myth. Other derivations are from Gaelic *coille*, 'a wood' (see note to the 'Mauchline Lady,' p. 140); or from *caol*, 'straits,' perhaps referring to the Firth of Clyde.

The Two Dogs

The tither was a ploughman's collie— other
A rhyming, ranting, raving billie, fellow
Wha for his friend an' comrade had him,
And in his freaks had 'Luath' ca'd him,
After some dog in Highland sang,*
Was made lang syne—Lord knows how lang.

He was a gash an' faithfu' tyke, wise
As ever lap a sheugh or dyke. leaped—ditch or wall
His honest, sonsie, baws'nt face † handsome
Ay gat him friends in ilka place; every
His breast was white, his tousie back shaggy
Weel clad wi' coat o' glossy black;
His gawsie tail, wi' upward curl, handsome
Hung owre his hurdies wi' a swirl. hips

Nae doubt but they were fain o' ither, fond
And unco pack an' thick thegither; very intimate
Wi' social nose whyles snuff'd an' snowket; sometimes —scented
Whyles mice an' moudieworts they howket; moles—dug up
Whyles scour'd awa' in lang excursion,
An' worry'd ither in diversion; each other
Till tir'd at last wi' mony a farce,
They set them down upon their ——,
An' there began a lang digression
About the 'lords o' the creation.'

CÆSAR.

I 've aften wonder'd, honest Luath,
What sort o' life poor dogs like you have;
An' when the gentry's life I saw,
What way poor bodies liv'd ava. at all

Our laird gets in his rackèd rents,
His coals, his kane,‡ an' a' his stents:§

* Cuchullin's dog in Ossian's *Fingal*.—B.
† Having a white stripe down the face.
‡ Rent in the shape of farm-produce.
§ Assessments.

He rises when he likes himsel;
His flunkies answer at the bell;
He ca's his coach; he ca's his horse;
He draws a bonie silken purse,
As lang 's my tail, whare, thro' the steeks, stitches
The yellow letter'd Geordie keeks. guinea peeps

Frae morn to e'en it 's nought but toiling,
At baking, roasting, frying, boiling;
An' tho' the gentry first are stechin, stuffing
Yet ev'n the ha' folk fill their pechan kitchen-people—belly
Wi' sauce, ragouts, an' sic like trashtrie, trash
That 's little short o' downright wastrie. waste
Our whipper-in, wee, blastet wonner, shrivelled-up wonder
Poor, worthless elf, it eats a dinner,
Better than ony tenant-man
His Honor has in a' the lan':
An' what poor cot-folk pit their painch in, cottagers —stomach
I own it 's past my comprehension.

LUATH.

Trowth, Cæsar, whyles they 're fash't enough: In truth—sometimes —troubled
A cotter howkin in a sheugh, digging—ditch
Wi' dirty stanes biggin a dyke, building—wall
Baring a quarry, an' sic like;
Himsel, a wife, he thus sustains,
A smytrie o' wee duddie weans, litter, family—little ragged children
An' nought but his han'-daurg, to keep hand's labour
Them right an' tight in thack an' raep.*

An' when they meet wi' sair disasters,
Like loss o' health or want o' masters,
Ye maist wad think, a wee touch langer, almost
An' they maun starve o' cauld and hunger:
But how it comes, I never kent yet, knew
They 're maistly wonderfu' contented
An' buirdly chiels, an' clever hizzies, stalwart men—women
Are bred in sic a way as this is.

* 'Thack and raep' means here—thatch and straw-rope to bind it.

CÆSAR.

But then to see how ye 're neglecket,
How huff'd, an' cuff'd, an' disrespecket!
L—d man, our gentry care as little
For delvers, ditchers, an' sic cattle;
They gang as saucy by poor folk,
As I wad by a stinking brock. badger

I 've notic'd, on our laird's court-day,—
An' mony a time my heart 's been wae,— sad
Poor tenant bodies, scant o' cash,
How they maun thole a factor's snash; must endure—abuse
He 'll stamp an' threaten, curse an' swear
He 'll apprehend them, poind their gear; make execution on —goods
While they maun stan', wi' aspect humble,
An' hear it a', an' fear an' tremble!

I see how folk live that hae riches;
But surely poor-folk maun be wretches! must— wretched creatures

LUATH.

They 're no sae wretched 's ane wad think.
Tho' constantly on poortith's brink, poverty
They 're sae accustom'd wi' the sight,
The view o' 't gies them little fright.

Then chance and fortune are sae guided,
They 're ay in less or mair provided;
An' tho' fatigu'd wi' close employment,
A blink o' rest 's a sweet enjoyment.

The dearest comfort o' their lives,
Their grushie weans an' faithfu' wives; thriving children
The prattling things are just their pride,
That sweetens a' their fire-side.

An' whyles twalpennie worth * o' nappy — ale
Can mak the bodies unco happy: — very
They lay aside their private cares,
To mind the Kirk and State affairs;
They 'll talk o' patronage an' priests,
Wi' kindling fury i' their breasts,
Or tell what new taxation 's comin,
An' ferlie at the folk in Lon'on. — wonder

As bleak-fac'd Hallowmass returns,
They get the jovial, rantin kirns, — harvest-home rejoicings
When rural life, of ev'ry station,
Unite in common recreation;
Love blinks, Wit slaps, an' social Mirth — shines forth
Forgets there 's Care upo' the earth.

That merry day the year begins,
They bar the door on frosty win's;
The nappy reeks wi' mantling ream, — ale smokes—froth
An' sheds a heart-inspiring steam;
The luntin pipe, an' sneeshin mill, — puffing out smoke—snuff-box
Are handed round wi' right guid will;
The cantie auld folks crackin crouse, — cheery—talking briskly
The young anes ranting thro' the house— — frolicking
My heart has been sae fain to see them,
That I for joy hae barket wi' them.

Still it 's owre true that ye hae said — too
Sic game is now owre often play'd;
There 's mony a creditable stock
O' decent, honest, fawsont folk, — seemly
Are riven out baith root an' branch, — torn
Some rascal's pridefu' greed to quench,
Wha thinks to knit himsel the faster
In favor wi' some gentle master,
Wha, aiblins thrang a parliamentin', — perhaps busy in Parliament
For Britain's guid his saul indentin'—— — good

* A pennyworth, twelve pence of Scots money being equal to one penny sterling.

CÆSAR.

Haith, lad, ye little ken about it : Faith—know little
For Britain's guid ! guid faith ! I doubt it.
Say rather, gaun as Premiers lead him : going
An' saying aye or no 's they bid him :
At operas an' plays parading,
Mortgaging, gambling, masquerading :
Or maybe, in a frolic daft, mad
To Hague or Calais takes a waft,
To mak a tour an' tak a whirl,
To learn *bon ton*, an' see the worl'.

There, at Vienna or Versailles,
He rives his father's auld entails ;*
Or by Madrid he takes the rout, road
To thrum guitars an' fecht wi' nowt ; fight—bullocks
Or down Italian vista startles,
Wh—re-hunting amang groves o' myrtles :
Then bowses drumlie German-water, drinks—turbid mineral-water
To mak himsel look fair an' fatter,
An' clear the consequential sorrows,
Love-gifts of Carnival signoras.

For Britain's guid ! for her destruction !
Wi' dissipation, feud an' faction.

LUATH.

Hech man ! dear sirs ! is that the gate style
They waste sae mony a braw estate ! many a fine
Are we sae foughten an' harass'd troubled
For gear to gang that gate at last ? wealth—road

O would they stay aback frae courts, away from
An' please themsels wi' countra sports,

* 'Rives' means literally 'tears.' Burns here doubtless refers to the actions—very common in his day—which were raised in court by the extravagant heirs of entailed Scottish estates, for the purpose of having the entails declared invalid, and so enabling them to burden the estates with debt.

It wad for ev'ry ane be better,
The laird, the tenant, an' the cotter!
For thae frank, rantin', ramblin' billies,
Fient haet o' them 's ill-hearted fellows; Not a bit
Except for breakin o' their timmer, cutting down their timber
Or speakin lightly o' their limmer, mistress
Or shootin o' a hare or moor-cock,
The ne'er-a-bit they 're ill to poor folk.

But will ye tell me, master Cæsar,
Sure great folk's life 's a life o' pleasure?
Nae cauld nor hunger e'er can steer them, bother
The vera thought o' 't need na fear them.

CÆSAR.

L—d, man, were ye but whyles where I am,
The gentles, ye wad ne'er envy them!
It 's true, they need na starve or sweat,
Thro' winter's cauld, or simmer's heat; cold—summer
They 've nae sair-wark to craze their banes, hard work
An' fill auld-age wi' grips an' granes: groans
But human bodies are sic fools,
For a' their colleges an' schools,
That when nae real ills perplex them,
They mak enow themsels to vex them; enough
An' ay the less they hae to sturt them, trouble
In like proportion, less will hurt them.

A country fellow at the pleugh,
His acre 's till'd, he 's right eneugh;
A country girl at her wheel,
Her dizzen 's done, she 's unco weel;
But gentlemen, an' ladies warst, worst
Wi' ev'n-down want o' wark are curst. work
They loiter, lounging, lank an' lazy;
Tho' deil-haet ails them, yet uneasy: nothing
Their days insipid, dull an' tasteless;
Their nights unquiet, lang an' restless.

An' ev'n their sports, their balls an' races,
Their galloping through public places,
There 's sic parade, sic pomp an' art,
The joy can scarcely reach the heart.

The men cast out in party-matches,
Then sowther a' in deep debauches. reconcile
Ae night they 're mad wi' drink an' wh–ring, One
Niest day their life is past enduring. Next

The ladies arm-in-arm in clusters,
As great an' gracious a' as sisters;
But hear their absent thoughts o' ither, each other
They 're a' run deils an' jads thegither. downright devils and wicked women
Whyles, owre the wee bit cup an' platie, Sometimes, over the small cup of tea
They sip the scandal-potion pretty;
Or lee-lang nights, wi' crabbet leuks, live-long—sour
Pore owre the devil's pictur'd beuks; cards
Stake on a chance a farmer's stackyard,
An' cheat like onie unhang'd blackguard. any

There 's some exception, man an' woman;
But this is Gentry's life in common.

By this, the sun was out o' sight,
An' darker gloaming brought the night: twilight
The bum-clock humm'd wi' lazy drone;* beetle
The kye stood rowtin i' the loan;† cows—lowing
When up they gat, and shook their lugs, got—rose
Rejoic'd they were na *men*, but *dogs;*
An' each took aff his several way,
Resolv'd to meet some ither day.

* Compare 'The beetle wheels his droning flight,' in Gray's 'Elegy.'

† 'Loan' means here an opening between fields of corn near, or leading to, the homestead, where cows are milked.

TO A LOUSE,

ON SEEING ONE ON A LADY'S BONNET AT CHURCH.*

Ha! whare ye gaun, ye crowlin ferlie! — where are you going?—crawling wonder
Your impudence protects you sairly: — marvellously
I canna say but ye strunt rarely, — strut dexterously
Owre gauze and lace; — over
Tho' faith, I fear, ye dine but sparely — in truth
On sic a place.

Ye ugly, creepin, blastit wonner, — worthless creature
Detested, shunn'd by saunt an' sinner, — saint
How daur ye set a fit upon her, — dare—foot
Sae fine a Lady!
Gae somewhere else and seek your dinner,
On some poor body.

Swith, in some beggar's haffet squattle; — Begone—side of the head—sprawl, squat down
There ye may creep, and sprawl, and sprattle — scramble
Wi' ither kindred, jumping cattle,
In shoals and nations;
Whare horn nor bane ne'er daur unsettle — comb—dare
Your thick plantations.

Now haud you there, ye 're out o' sight, — remain
Below the fatt'rils, snug an' tight; — ribbon-ends
Na faith † ye yet! ye 'll no be right
Till ye 've got on it,
The vera tapmost, tow'ring height
O' Miss's bonnet.

My sooth! right bauld ye set your nose out, — bold
As plump and gray as onie grozet; — any gooseberry
O for some rank, mercurial rozet, — rosin, mercury formed into a paste
Or fell, red smeddum, — pungent powder
I 'd gie you sic a hearty dose o' 't, — give
Wad dress your droddum! — chastise—breech

* It is generally understood that this 'lady' was one of the Mauchline 'belles.'
† 'Faith (or haith) ye yet' is best rendered by the English phrase 'confound you!'

I wad na been surpris'd to spy — would not have been
You on an auld wife's flainen toy; — old-fashioned flannel cap
Or aiblins some bit duddie boy, — perhaps—little ragged
On 's wyliecoat; — under-jacket
But Miss's fine *Lunardi*,* fye!
How daur ye do 't?

O Jenny, dinna toss your head,
An' set your beauties a' abread! — on view
Ye little ken what cursèd speed
The blastie 's † makin!
Thae winks and finger-ends, I dread,
Are notice takin! ‡

O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us — gift
To see oursels as ithers see us!
It wad frae monie a blunder free us — from
And foolish notion:
What airs in dress an' gait wad lea'e us, — leave
And ev'n Devotion!

'The Twa Herds' had secured for Burns the friendship of John Goldie and other citizens of Kilmarnock, and he appears, before February 1786, to have paid several visits to that town, which is only nine miles from Mauchline. The popular tradition is that Goldie called at Mossgiel one day during harvest, that Burns went out with him, and, sitting down behind a *stook*, read to his visitor several of his poems. Goldie, delighted with what he heard, suggested that the poems should be published, and invited their author to visit him at Kilmarnock. There, at Goldie's table, it is said, Burns

* Vincenzo Lunardi (b. 1759, d. 1806), secretary to the Neapolitan ambassador in London, and, in his own opinion, 'first aerial traveller in the English atmosphere,' had made a considerable reputation during the years 1784 and 1785 by his balloon ascents in England and Scotland. *An Account of Five Aerial Voyages in Scotland, in a Series of Letters to his Guardian, Gherardo Campagni*, by Vincenzo Lunardi, was published at London in 1786. A fashionable balloon-shaped bonnet was named after him.

† 'Blastie' means 'shrivelled-up dwarf.' Here the word is used as a term of contempt.

‡ These two lines may be rendered—'I fear, from the way folk are winking and pointing in your direction, that they see what is the matter.'

met a group of the leading men of the town—Paterson, the town-clerk; Dr Hamilton; Major Parker, banker; Bailies Gregory and Greenshields; Dr John Moore; and Robert Muir, merchant. What immediately followed from the visit to Goldie it is impossible to say: apparently, any wish that may have been formed either by the 'Terror of the Whigs' himself or by any of his friends to get the poems published, had no immediate result.

At this time, owing to the death, in June 1785, of the Rev. John Mutrie, minister of the second charge of Kilmarnock, great excitement prevailed there, it being uncertain whether the Earl of Glencairn, who was patron of the living, would select a moderate or a 'high flier' in his place. When it was learned that the appointment had been settled in favour of the Rev. James Mackinlay, a young member of the 'zealous' party, his friends were overjoyed. They remembered how moderate or 'common-sense' theology had been preached for many years by Mutrie's predecessor, Lindsay, and they bewailed the effects of so long a reign of terror. But now his place was to be taken by one who might be expected to do much to repair the evil. The moderates were proportionately vexed. To console them to some extent, Burns composed a poem containing an anticipatory view of the approaching ceremony, by which Mackinlay was to be introduced to his charge.*

THE ORDINATION.

For sense they little owe to Frugal Heav'n.—
To please the Mob they hide the little giv'n.†

Kilmarnock Wabsters, fidge an' claw, weavers—shrug—scratch
An' pour your creeshie nations; greasy squadrons
An' ye wha leather rax an' draw, stretch
Of a' denominations;‡

* The actual ordination of Mackinlay did not take place till 6th April 1786. Burns, when circulating copies of 'The Ordination' among his friends, did not send all of them forth in his own name. The Earl of Rosebery has in his possession a manuscript which is entitled 'The Ordination—a Scotch poem, by Rob Rhymer.'

† In the 'Rob Rhymer' manuscript, 'Ruisseaux' is given below these lines, as if this were the name of their author.

‡ Kilmarnock was then a town of between three and four thousand inhabitants, most of whom were engaged either in the manufacture of carpets and other coarse woollen goods, or in the preparation of leather.

Swith to the Laigh Kirk, ane an' a', Away!—Low Church
An' there tak up your stations;
Then aff to Begbie's * in a raw, row
An' pour divine libations
For joy this day.

Curst 'Common-sense,' that imp o' h—ll,
Cam in wi' Maggie Lauder; †
But Oliphant aft made her yell,
An' Russell sair misca'd her; ‡ reviled
This day M'Kinlay taks the flail,
An' he 's the boy will blaud her! slap

* A tavern, now the Angel Hotel, in Market Lane, on the other side of the Marnock Water from the Laigh Kirk. The narrowness of the bridge across which the worshippers had to pass necessitated their straggling 'in a raw.' 'Crookes's' appears in place of 'Begbie's' in the 'Rob Rhymer' manuscript. It is not impossible that 'Crookes's' was, like 'Begbie's,' a tavern in Kilmarnock. On the other hand, Crookes may have been a hospitable member of the Crooks (spelled 'Crookes' and 'Crox') family, which has long been associated with the leather trade in Kilmarnock, and who may have treated his 'leather raxing and drawing' friends to home-brewed ale and porter. There were no licensing acts in these days.

† A notion prevailed that Mr Lindsay had been indebted for his presentation to his wife, Margaret Lauder, who was popularly believed, but, it now appears, quite erroneously, to have been housekeeper to Lord Glencairn, patron of the living. Mr Lindsay's induction, in 1764, was so much in opposition to the sentiments of the people, that it produced a riot, attended by many outrages. Three young men, who had obtained an unenviable notoriety by their violence, were whipped through Ayr, and imprisoned for a month. These circumstances evoked from a shoemaker, named Hunter, a scoffing ballad, to which Burns alludes in his original note on this passage. The violence of the people was so extreme at the attempted induction of Mr Lindsay, as to put an effectual stop to the proceedings of the presbytery. The clergy dispersed in terror. A curious anecdote connected with the affair was related by the late William Aiton of Hamilton: 'The minister of Fenwick fled in trepidation, and, mounting his horse, proceeded to ride home, with the fearful scene still occupying his excited imagination. It happened that an English commercial traveller was at the same time leaving the town on his way to Glasgow. He asked the road, which was then somewhat difficult to find, and very bad when it was found. "Keep after that man for the first four miles, and ye cannot go wrong," said the people. The minister, finding a horseman following him very hard, thought it was an outraged Calvinist. He clapped the spurs to his beast, and fled faster than before. The Englishman, fearful to lose his way, put his horse to speed too, and then the affair became a John Gilpin scamper, only with two actors instead of one. At last the poor minister turned down a lane to one of his farmers, on whom he called in desperation to bring out his people and save his life. The Englishman, following close up, rode into the farmyard at the same moment, when, instead of a deadly combat on theological grounds, there took place only an explanation. The whole party enjoyed the joke so much that the farmer insisted on keeping the stranger as his guest for the night, with the minister to help away the toddy.' In the 'Rob Rhymer' manuscript, this note is given: 'I suppose the author here means Mrs Lindsay, wife to the late Rev. and worthy Mr Lindsay, as that was her maiden name, I am told. *N.B.*—He got the Laigh Kirk of Kilmarnock.'

‡ The Rev. James Oliphant was minister of Kilmarnock High Church from 1764 to 1774, when he was translated to the parish of Dumbarton. He died in 1818, at the age of eighty-four. He was an 'Auld Light,' like Russell, and possessed of a powerful voice, which enabled him to make the kirk 'yell.'

He 'll clap a shangan * on her tail,
An' set the bairns to daud her — children—bespatter
Wi' dirt this day.

Mak haste an' turn King David owre, — give out for singing one of the Psalms of David
An' lilt wi' holy clangor; — sing
O' double verse come gie us four,
An' skirl up 'the Bangor:' † — shriek, sing noisily
This day the Kirk kicks up a stoure, — dust, noise
Nae mair the knaves shall wrang her, — wrong
For Heresy is in her pow'r,
And gloriously she 'll whang her — punish with blows from a strap
Wi' pith this day.

Come, let a proper text be read,
An' touch it aff wi' vigour,
How graceless Ham ‡ leugh at his Dad,
Which made Canaan a nigger;
Or Phinehas § drove the murdering blade,
Wi' w——e-abhorring rigour;
Or Zipporah, || the scauldin jad, — scolding vixen
Was like a bluidy tiger,
I' th' inn that day.

There, try his mettle on the creed,
And bind him down wi' caution,
That Stipend is a carnal weed
He taks but for the fashion;
And gie him o'er the flock, to feed,
And punish each transgression; ¶

* A stick cleft at one end to put the tail of a dog in, by way of frolic or to frighten him away.

† The name of a plaintive psalm-tune, of English origin, which was often sung in Scottish churches. 'Double verse,' in the metrical version of the Psalms, is a stanza of eight lines. 'Four double verses' was twice as much as was usually sung at a time.

‡ Genesis, ix. 22.—*R. B.*

§ Numbers, xxv. 8.—*R. B.*

|| Exodus, iv. 25.—*R. B.*

¶ Variation—'There, try his mettle on the creed,
Wi' form'la and confession;
And lay your hands upon his head,
And seal his high commission,
The holy flock to tent and feed,
And punish each transgression,' &c.

Especial, rams that cross the breed,
Gie them sufficient threshin, beating
Spare them nae day.

Now auld Kilmarnock cock thy tail,
And toss thy horns fu' canty ; merrily
Nae mair thou 'lt rowte out-owre the dale, low—all over
Because thy pasture's scanty ;
For lapfu's large o' gospel kail armfuls—greens
Shall fill thy crib in plenty,
An' runts o' grace the pick an' wale, cabbage stalks—choice
No gi'en by way o' dainty, not given
But ilka day. every

Nae mair by 'Babel's streams' we 'll weep,
To think upon our 'Zion ;'
And hing our fiddles up to sleep, hang
Like baby-clouts a-dryin :
Come, screw the pegs wi' tunefu' cheep, chirp
And o'er the thairms be tryin ; fiddle-strings
Oh, rare ! to see our elbucks wheep, elbows jerk
And a' like lamb-tails flyin
Fu' fast this day !

Lang Patronage, wi' rod o' airn, iron
Has shor'd the Kirk's undoin, threatened
As lately Fenwick, sair forfairn, sorely distressed
Has proven to its ruin : * proved
Our Patron, honest man ! Glencairn,
He saw mischief was brewin ;
And like a godly elect bairn,
He 's wal'd us out a true ane, chosen
And sound this day.

Now Robertson,† harangue nae mair,
But steek your gab for ever : close—mouth

* Allusion is here made to the long-disputed settlement of the Rev. William Boyd as minister of the parish of Fenwick. The people being prejudiced against him as a moderate, or rather as the nominee of that party, his settlement was resisted as long as possible ; but he was at length ordained in the council-chamber of Irvine, June 25, 1782. Mr Boyd afterwards became very popular, and remained in Fenwick till his death in 1828.

† The Rev. John Robertson, Mackinlay's colleague, and a moderate. He was inducted in 1765, and died in 1799.

Or try the wicked town of Ayr,*
For there they 'll think you clever;
Or, nae reflection on your lear, learning
Ye may commence a Shaver; barber
Or to the Netherton † repair,
And turn a carpet-weaver,
Aff-hand this day. at once

Mutrie ‡ and you were just a match,
We never had sic twa drones:
Auld 'Hornie' § did the Laigh Kirk watch,
Just like a winkin baudrons: cat
And ay he catch'd the tither wretch, other
To fry them in his caudrons: caldrons
But now his honour maun detach, must
Wi' a' his brimstone squadrons,
Fast, fast this day.

See, see auld Orthodoxy's faes foes
She 's swingein thro' the city; whipping
Hark, how the nine-tail'd cat she plays!
I vow it 's unco pretty: very
There, Learning, with his Greekish face,
Grunts out some Latin ditty;
And 'Common Sense' is gaun, she says, going
To mak to Jamie Beattie ||
Her plaint this day.

* It is probable that Burns did not mean here to libel the community of Ayr as it was in his day. It has been suggested, plausibly enough, that Ayr obtained its reputation for 'wickedness' when it was the centre of such family or clan feuds as that of the Kennedys, which terminated in the 'Auchindraine Tragedy' of 1602. Or Burns may have been thinking of 'godly' John Welsh, who became the first reformed minister of Ayr, and who found 'the place so divided into factions, and filled with bloody conflicts, a man could hardly walk the streets with safety.' In theological 'wickedness,' too, the Ayr of 'D'rymple mild' and his moderate friends could hardly vie with the 'Air toun' of which Wodrow wrote in June 1720: 'On Sabbath, in time of divine worship, men of some character, Mr Charles Cochran, James Dalrymple, clerk, and many others, to the number of seven or eight, instead of worshipping with other Christians, meet in a tavern, and read Woolston's *Discourses on Miracles*, and ridicule all religion.'

† A district of Kilmarnock, where carpet-weaving was carried on.

‡ The clergyman whom Mackinlay succeeded, and who had been minister of the second charge of Kilmarnock from 1775 to 1785.

§ A nickname given to the Devil, from the horns he is supposed occasionally to wear.

|| Doubtless the author of *The Minstrel* and the *Essay on Truth* is meant by Burns. Beattie was a moderate.

But there 's Morality * himsel,
  Embracing all opinions;
Hear, how he gies the tither yell, other
  Between his twa companions;
See, how she peels the skin an' fell,†
  As ane were peelin onions!
Now there, they 're packèd aff to h—ll,
  And banish'd our dominions,
    Henceforth this day.

O happy day! rejoice, rejoice!
  Come bouse about the porter! pass round
Morality's demure decoys
  Shall here nae mair find quarter:
M'Kinlay, Russell, are the boys
  That Heresy can torture;
They 'll gie her on a rape a hoyse, rope—hoist
  And cowe her measure shorter cut
    By th' head some day.

Come, bring the tither mutchkin in, other—measure of whisky equal to a pint
  And here 's, for a conclusion,
To ev'ry 'New-light' mother's son,
  From this time forth, Confusion:
If mair they deave us wi' their din, deafen
  Or Patronage intrusion,
We 'll light a spunk, and, ev'ry skin,‡ brimstone match
  We 'll rin them aff in fusion,
    Like oil, some day.§

* The evangelicals constantly reproached the moderates with preaching a 'cold morality,' to the neglect of 'the doctrines of grace.'

† 'Fell' means the cuticle immediately below the skin, which tastes bitter.

‡ This may be interpreted—'We'll kindle a fire that will melt them, one and all, to nothing,' like 'rendering' the fat of pigs to lard.

§ Mackinlay became a favourite preacher, very much, it is said, in consequence of his 'fine manner;' and had the degree D.D. conferred upon him. On the 6th April 1836 a dinner, presided over by the Provost of Kilmarnock, was given him, on the occasion of his completing the fiftieth year of his ministry. Referring to his famous ordination and the persons present at the subsequent dinner, he said: 'Time, in its sure and silent course, has carried them all away, so that I do not recollect a single individual who was at that dinner who now survives, and in the congregation to which I now minister I cannot recognise above three or four who were members of it when I was ordained.' Dr Mackinlay

To this period may be referred a poem which did not see the light till after the fame of Burns was established:

ADDRESS
TO THE UNCO GUID, OR THE RIGIDLY RIGHTEOUS.

My son, these Maxims make a rule,
  And lump them ay thegither; — together
The *Rigid Righteous* is a fool,
  The *Rigid Wise* anither:
The cleanest corn that e'er was dight — thrashed or winnowed
  May hae some pyles o' caff in; — grains—chaff
So ne'er a fellow-creature slight
  For random fits o' daffin. — merriment, folly

SOLOMON.—Eccles. vii. 16.

O ye wha are sae guid yoursel,
  Sae pious and sae holy,
Ye 've nought to do but mark and tell
  Your Neebour's fauts and folly! — faults
Whase life is like a weel-gaun mill, — well-going
  Supply'd wi' store o' water,
The heapèt happer 's ebbing still, — hopper
  And still the clap plays clatter.

Hear me, ye venerable Core, — folk
  As counsel for poor mortals,
That frequent pass douce Wisdom's door — grave
  For glaikit Folly's portals; — careless
I, for their thoughtless, careless sakes,
  Would here propone defences,
Their donsie tricks, their black mistakes, — unlucky
  Their failings and mischances.

Ye see your state wi' theirs compar'd,
  And shudder at the niffer, — comparison
But cast a moment's fair regard,
  What maks the mighty differ; — difference

died on 10th February 1841, at the age of eighty-five. According to a newspaper obituary notice, he was a native of the parish of Douglas, in Lanarkshire, and entered life as 'tutor' in the family of Sir William Cunninghame of Windyhill, by whose influence with the Earl of Glencairn he obtained the presentation to the second charge of Kilmarnock.

Discount what scant occasion gave,
That purity ye pride in,
Aud (what 's aft mair than a' the lave) often more—rest
Your better art o' hiding.

Think, when your castigated pulse
Gies now and then a wallop, plunge, flourish
What ragings must his veins convulse,
That still eternal gallop:
Wi' wind and tide fair i' your tail,
Right on ye scud your sea-way;
But in the teeth o' baith to sail, both
It maks an unco leeway. terrible

See Social-life and Glee sit down,
All joyous and unthinking,
Till, quite transmugrify'd, they 're grown transformed
Debauchery and Drinking:
O would they stay to calculate
Th' eternal consequences;
Or your more dreaded h—ll to state,
D—mnation of expences!*

Ye high, exalted, virtuous Dames,
Ty'd up in godly laces,
Before ye gie poor *Frailty* names,
Suppose a change o' cases;
A dear-lov'd lad, convenience snug,
A treacherous inclination—
But, let me whisper i' your lug, ear
Ye 're aiblins nae temptation. perhaps

Then gently scan your brother Man,
Still gentler sister Woman;
Tho' they may gang a kennin † wrang,
To step aside is human:

* These two lines may be interpreted, 'O if they would but pause to set forth the debit and credit sides of the transaction, and consider that damnation in the hell you dread more than they do is the expense of the game they are playing.'

† A 'kennin' means 'the least thing,' or 'just as much as you may ken (perceive) and no more,' and is almost identical with the modern 'sensation.'

One point must still be greatly dark,
The moving *Why* they do it;
And just as lamely can ye mark,
How far perhaps they rue it.

Who made the heart, 'tis *He* alone
Decidedly can try us,
He knows each chord its various tone,
Each spring its various bias:
Then at the balance let 's be mute,
We never can adjust it;
What 's *done* we partly may compute,
But know not what 's *resisted*.

The productions of this busy winter had not been confined to Burns's table-drawer at Mossgiel. There were capable men around him, to whom he might show his poems, and whose opinion on them was worth having—Gavin Hamilton, his bosom friend James Smith, his shrewd medical attendant Mackenzie, his Kilmarnock admirers, several moderate ministers, and, finally, Robert Aiken, perhaps the most susceptible of them all to the influences of poetry. This Mr Aiken,* to whom Burns has given immortality by the dedication to him of his 'Cotter's Saturday Night,' was a writer (solicitor), and surveyor of taxes in the town of Ayr. He was a man of warm affections, liberal culture, and a rhetorical gift, which obtained for him the nickname of 'Orator Bob.'† Burns submitted many of his poems to this friend for perusal, and afterwards said of him, 'Mr Aiken read me into fame.'

* Robert Aiken was born in Ayr on the 23d August 1739. His father was a shipmaster in Ayr, and his mother, Sarah Dalrymple, was the daughter of James Dalrymple, sheriff-clerk of Ayr, and sister of Dr William Dalrymple. He died in 1807.

† Of Aiken's sensibility and oratorical powers innumerable anecdotes are given. One is worth preserving. 'Some years after Burns's death, a friend with whom he happened to be walking from Ayr to celebrate the 25th of January at Alloway Kirk, produced an ode to the memory of the poet, which he had composed for the occasion. Aiken read a few verses, and walked on in advance without speaking. At last he said in a faltering tone: "That will do. There are two criteria by which I judge of the merits of a production of this kind—first, my eyes are suffused; next, the buttons of my waistcoat *skelp*." His vest had actually, like Andrew Lammie's in the old ballad, burst open! He once had occasion, at a large party, to make a speech in answer to a toast, his uncle, the Rev. Dr Dalrymple, being also present. He addressed his venerable relative in such moving terms as to draw tears from every eye. An Irish officer who was present caught the infection, wiped his cheeks, and, looking round the company, said: "Now, can anybody tell me what is the *maning* of all this?"'

We have a glimpse of Burns's situation and his doings in February 1786 in a letter

TO MR JOHN RICHMOND, EDINBURGH.*

MOSSGIEL, *Feb.* 17, 1786.

MY DEAR SIR—I have not time at present to upbraid you for your silence and neglect; I shall only say I received yours with great pleasure. I have enclosed you a piece of rhyming ware for your perusal. I have been very busy with the muses since I saw you, and have composed, among several others, 'The Ordination,' a poem on Mr M'Kinlay's being called to Kilmarnock; 'Scotch Drink,' a poem; 'The Cotter's Saturday Night;' 'An Address to the Devil,' &c. I have likewise compleated my poem on the 'Dogs,' but have not shewn it to the world. My chief patron now is Mr Aiken in Ayr, who is pleased to express great approbation of my works. Be so good as send me Fergusson, by Connel,† and I will remit you the money. I have no news to acquaint you with about Mauchline, they are just going on in the old way. I have some very important news with respect to myself, not the most agreeable, news I am sure you cannot guess, but I shall give you the particulars another time. I am extremely happy with Smith; he is the only friend I have *now* in Mauchline. I can scarcely forgive your long neglect of me, and I beg you will let me hear from you regularly by Connel. If you would act your part as a FRIEND, I am sure neither *good* nor *bad* fortune should estrange or alter me. Excuse haste, as I got yours but yesterday. I am, My dear Sir, Yours, ROBT. BURNESS.

THE INVENTORY.

IN ANSWER TO A MANDATE BY THE SURVEYOR OF THE TAXES.‡

Sir, as your mandate did request,
I send you here a faithfu' list,

* John Richmond was born in the parish of Sorn, Ayrshire, in 1765, and, at about seventeen years of age, became a clerk in the office of Gavin Hamilton and his brother in Mauchline. He as clerk, Burns as president, Smith as procurator-fiscal, and, latterly, William Hunter as messenger-at-arms, constituted the notorious Court of Equity. Richmond had gone to Edinburgh in the end of 1785 to enter a writer's office: his departure from Mauchline was perhaps hastened by the fact that, like Burns and Smith, he had been 'disciplined' by the kirk-session. Although Richmond subsequently figured in Burns's history, it may be mentioned here that, after some years' residence in Edinburgh, he returned to Mauchline, set up in business as a lawyer on his own account, married, like Burns, the partner of his youthful 'fault,' and survived till 1846.

† The Mauchline carrier.

‡ In May 1785, in order to liquidate ten millions of unfunded debt, Pitt made a considerable addition to the number of 'taxed articles,' including female servants. The usual notice in advance was sent by Robert Aiken as tax-surveyor for the district. Dr Currie

O' gudes an' gear, an' a' my graith, commodities—wealth—accoutrements, dress
To which I 'm clear to gi'e my aith.* oath

Imprimis, then, for carriage cattle,
I hae four brutes o' gallant mettle,
As ever drew afore a pettle. plough-stick
My *Lan' afore* 's † a gude auld *has been*,
An' wight an' wilfu' a' his days been.
My *Lan' ahin* 's ‡ a weel gaun fillie,
That aft has borne me hame frae Killie,§ often
An' your auld burrough mony a time,
In days when riding was nae crime—
But ance whan in my wooing pride
I like a blockhead boost to ride, behoved
The wilfu' creature sae I pat to,
(L—d pardon a' my sins an' that too!)
I play'd my fillie sic a shavie, such an ill turn
She 's a' bedevil'd wi' the spavie. spavin
My *Furr ahin* 's || a wordy beast, worthy
As e'er in tug or tow was trac'd.
The fourth 's a Highland Donald hastie, quick-tempered Highland pony
A d—d red-wud Kilburnie blastie; ¶ stark-mad

Foreby a Cowt, o' Cowts the wale, Besides—colt—choice
As ever ran afore a tail.
If he be spar'd to be a beast,
He 'll draw me fifteen pun' at least.— pounds

Wheel carriages I ha'e but few,
Three carts, an' twa are feckly new; almost

gave the following heading to the poem: 'Answer to a mandate sent by the Surveyor of the windows, carriages, &c., to each farmer, ordering him to send a signed list of his horses, servants, wheel-carriages, &c., and whether he was a married man or a bachelor, and what children they had.'

* Variation— 'My servants, horses, ploughs, and graith,
To which I 'm free to tak my aith.'

† The fore-horse on the left hand, in the plough.—*B.*

‡ The hindmost horse on the left hand, in the plough.—*B.*

§ Kilmarnock.—*B.*

|| The hindmost horse on the right hand, in the plough.—*B.*

¶ Burns is understood to have bought this horse at Kilbirnie fair, from William Kirkwood, a horse-dealer, who lived at Baillieston, in that neighbourhood.

Ae auld wheelbarrow, mair for token, — more by token
Ae leg an' baith the trams are broken; — One—both—shafts
I made a poker o' the spin'le, — spindle
An' my auld mother brunt the trin'le.— — wheel

For men, I 've three mischievous boys,
Run-de'ils for rantin' an' for noise; — regular devils—frolic
A gaudsman ane, a thrasher t' other, — driver of horses at the plough
Wee Davock* hauds the nowt in fother. — little—cattle—fodder
I rule them as I ought, discreetly,
An' aften labour them compleatly. — make them do their work thoroughly
An' ay on Sundays duly nightly,
I on the 'Questions' *targe* them tightly; — Shorter Catechism —cross-question
Till, faith, wee Davock 's turned sae gleg, — sharp
Tho' scarcely langer than your leg,
He 'll screed you aff Effectual Calling,† — repeat
As fast as ony in the dwalling.—

I 've nane in female servan' station,
(L—d keep me ay frae a' temptation!)
I ha'e nae wife; and that my bliss is,
An' ye have laid nae tax on misses; — mistresses
An' then if kirk folks dinna clutch me, — kirk-session
I ken the devils dare na touch me.

Wi' weans I 'm mair than weel contented, — children
Heav'n sent me ane mae than I wanted. — one more
My sonsie, smirking, dear-bought Bess,‡ — plump
She stares the daddy in her face,
Enough of ought ye like but grace;
But her, my bonny sweet wee lady,
I 've paid enough for her already,
An' gin ye tax her or her mither, — if
B' the L—d! ye'se get them a' thegither.

And now, remember Mr Aiken,
Nae kind of licence out I 'm takin';

* David Hutcheson. See p. 59.

† In the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly of Divines—which used to be known in Scotland as 'The Questions'—*What is Effectual Calling?* is one of the interrogations.

‡ The poet's child, then living at Mossgiel, and about fifteen months old.

* * * * *

My travel a' on foot I 'll shank it, tramp
I 've sturdy bearers, Gude be thankit.*— God
The Kirk an' you may tak you that,
It puts but little in your pat; pot
Sae dinna put me in your buke,
Nor for my ten white shillings luke.

This list wi' my ain han' I wrote it, own
Day an' date as under notit.
Then know all ye whom it concerns,
Subscripsi huic, ROBERT BURNS.

MOSSGIEL, *February 22d*, 1786.

The letter which follows was the result of a request for a sight of his 'Cotter's Saturday Night,' from John Kennedy, a relative of Mrs Gavin Hamilton, and who then resided as factor at Dumfries House, the seat of the Earl of Dumfries, on the banks of the Lugar, near Cumnock, and about six miles from Mauchline.†

TO MR JOHN KENNEDY.

SIR—I have done myself the pleasure of complying with your request in sending you my *Cottager*. If you have a leisure minute I should be glad you would copy it, and return me either the original or the transcript, as I have not a copy of it by me, and I have a friend who wishes to see it.

Now, Kennedy, if foot or horse
E'er bring you in by Mauchlin corse,‡
(L—, man, there 's lasses there wad force
A hermit's fancy;
An' down the gate in faith they 're worse, road—in truth
An' mair unchancy). more dangerous

* Variation—'I 've sturdy stumps, the Lord be thanked!
And a' my gates on foot I 'll shank it.'

† Mr Kennedy subsequently became factor to the Earl of Breadalbane. After holding this post for eighteen years, he retired to Edinburgh, where he died in 1812, at the age of fifty-five.

‡ The market-place of the village, so called from the cross or *corse* that stood there.

But as I 'm sayin, please step to Dow's,*
An' taste sic gear as Johnie brews, — such—liquor
Till some bit callan bring me news — little boy
That ye are there;
An' if ye dinna hae a bouze, — convivial meeting
I 'se ne'er drink mair. — more

It 's no I like to sit an' swallow,
Then like a swine to puke and wallow;
But gie me just a true good fallow, — fellow
Wi' right ingine, — the proper disposition
And spunkie † ance to mak us mellow, — only
An' then we 'll shine.

Now if ye 're ane o' warl's folk, — a worldly person
Wha rate the wearer by the cloak,
An' sklent on poverty their joke, — direct
Wi' bitter sneer,
Wi' you nae friendship I will troke, — exchange
Nor cheap nor dear.

But if, as I 'm informèd weel,
Ye hate as ill 's the vera deil
The flinty heart that canna feel— — cannot
Come, sir, here 's to you!
Hae, there 's my haun, I wiss you weel, — hand—wish
An' gude be wi' you. — may all go well with you

ROBT. BURNESS.

MOSSGIEL, 3d *March* 1786.

TO MR ROBERT MUIR, KILMARNOCK. ‡

MOSSGIEL, 20th *March* 1786.

DEAR SIR—I am heartily sorry I had not the pleasure of seeing you as you returned through Mauchline; but as I was engaged, I could not be in town before the evening.

* See p. 229.

† 'Spunkie' appears to mean here 'whisky. 'Spunkie ance' may be translated 'just enough of whisky to produce liveliness.'

‡ Robert Muir was born at Kilmarnock, August 8, 1758, and had established himself as a wine merchant there some four years before he became acquainted with Burns. Their friendship, as will be seen, developed with great rapidity. Besides his business, Muir inherited from his father the small estate of Loanfoot, which was burdened with debt. He

I here enclose you my 'Scotch Drink,' and 'may the —— follow with a blessing for your edification.' I hope, some time before we hear the gowk,* to have the pleasure of seeing you in Kilmarnock, when I intend to have a gill between us in a mutchkin-stoup, which will be a great comfort and consolation to, Dear Sir, your humble Servant,

ROBT. BURNESS.

The commencement of Burns's acquaintance with Jean Armour has been already touched upon. She had now been for upwards of a year the goddess of his idolatry. He had, it is true, written no songs directly in her honour; but he had expressed his admiration of her in his 'Epistle to Davie,' in the 'Address to the Deil,' and in 'The Vision.' It became evident, in the spring of 1786, that 'love had become transgression.' At this time Burns and his brother had too much reason to fear that their farm would prove a ruinous concern. He would seem, at first, not to have thought of marriage with Jean as the only course open to him. No other conclusion can be gathered from the following fragment of a letter

TO MR JAMES SMITH, MAUCHLINE.

. . . Against two things I am fixed as fate—staying at home, and owning her conjugally. The first, by Heaven, I will not do!—the last, by hell, I will never do!—A good God bless you, and make you happy, up to the warmest weeping wish of parting friendship. . . .

If you see Jean, tell her I will meet her, so help me God in my hour of need. R.B.†

It may fairly be inferred from the terms of this letter ‡ that Burns

succeeded, however, in relieving the burdens upon it; the discharge of the last bond was entered in the Register of Deeds six days before he died of consumption, on 22d April 1788. It seems to be uncertain if Muir was ever married. 'There is,' wrote Mr George Mure Smith to the *Scotsman* of April 7, 1877, 'a record of the birth, in July 1782, of "Robert, son of Robert Muir, merchant, Kilmarnock," and I would suppose that this is his son, but I cannot positively affirm. But if so, mother and child had passed away before consumption removed Robert Muir in the early spring of 1788. The estate passed to Muir's "only sister and nearest lawful heir, Agnes Muir."' She had married William Smith, merchant, Kilmarnock. Shortly before her death, she sold Loanfoot to Miss Henrietta Scot, who afterwards became Duchess of Portland.

* The cuckoo (or gouckoo), which generally visits this country about the beginning of April.

† Lockhart, who gave this fragment to the world in 1828, thus explains it: 'When Burns was informed of Miss Armour's condition, the announcement staggered him like a blow. He saw nothing for it but to fly the country at once; and in a note to James Smith of Mauchline, the *confidant* of his amour, he thus wrote.'

‡ It is assumed that Lockhart is correct in the approximate date he has assigned to the letter.

and Jean met; that, as happened all through his career, his better instincts triumphed over the purely selfish impulse 'not to own her conjugally,' and prevented him from sinking into mere vulgar Don Juanism. He agreed to acknowledge her as his wife. He gave her some such acknowledgment in writing—a document sufficient, at all events in his opinion, to constitute what in Scotland is regarded as an irregular marriage.* Jean possibly expected that, if her parents were first made acquainted with her 'fault' by the announcement of clandestine nuptials, they would look more mildly upon it. She was mistaken. Her father, of course, knew that Burns's circumstances were embarrassed, and that he was already burdened with an illegitimate daughter. It may be assumed, also, that he had heard exaggerated accounts of the 'wildness' of Burns's companions. In his eyes the marriage of his daughter to such a man, so far from mending matters, appeared to make them worse.

Burns admitted the hopelessness of his present position; but he offered to emigrate to Jamaica in the hope of bettering it, and of coming home in a few years and claiming Jean as his wife. If this plan should not meet with Mr Armour's approbation, he was willing to become a common labourer, to furnish means for the present support of his wife and her expected offspring. It

* It is by no means certain that had Burns's acknowledgment—however it was worded—been brought before a Scottish court, it would have been at once recognised as constituting an 'irregular' marriage. The notorious dubiety on this subject has been very clearly stated by the late Dr Edgar of Mauchline, in his *Lectures* (second series) *on Old Church Life in Scotland:* 'It is certain that Burns, in the spring of 1786 gave Jean some writing regarding their marriage; but it seems to me not quite so certain what was the precise tenor of that writing. Even supposing, however, that the "unlucky paper," as the poet terms it, contained a declaration by Burns that Jean was his wife, it is questionable if the law would on that account have held them married persons. Lord Fraser says that although some writers on law had, before 1786, affirmed that *sponsalia de presenti* constitutes marriage, their opinion was not supported by any judicial authority. Lord Braxfield, in 1796, declared from the Bench that consent *de presenti* does not constitute marriage "without the priest's blessing, or something equivalent;" and Sir Ilay Campbell said, "I deny in principle that consent makes marriage without ceremony or coitus." Church courts, during the greater part of last century, scarcely knew what to recognise as marriages. Had Burns's alleged marriage by the unlucky paper come before the Civil Courts in 1786, and the fact of consent *de presenti* been clearly established, it is at least doubtful if the marriage would have been affirmed. There is reason to think that all the length the Court would have gone, would have been to grant an order to compel solemnisation. The doctrine laid down by Erskine on this subject, however, is as follows: "Marriage may be without doubt perfected by the consent of parties declared by writing, provided the writing be so conceived as necessarily to impart their present consent. The proof of marriage is not confined to the testimonies of the clergyman and witnesses present at the ceremony. The subsequent acknowledgment of it by the parties is sufficient to support the marriage, if it appear to have been made not in a jocular manner, but seriously, and with deliberation."'

does not seem to have been one of his hopes that the poems lying in the table-drawer at Mossgiel could help in any way to lighten the burden he was willing to incur. Armour refused to fall in with this view. He probably believed that his daughter, if free from her connection with the unfortunate poet, might yet hope for a comfortable settlement in life.* He therefore announced his resolution, if possible, to annul the marriage, such as it was. Jean ultimately surrendered the 'paper' to her angry father, by whom it seems to have been placed in the hands of Mr Aiken of Ayr. He, in turn, 'mutilated' the document by 'cutting out' or erasing the names of Jean and Burns. At all events, a rumour to that effect reached the ears of Burns, and was believed by him. He felt very keenly what he regarded as Jean's desertion of him, and was thrown by it into a state of mind which, according to his own confession, 'had very nearly given him one or two of the principal qualifications for a place among those who have lost the chart and mistaken the reckoning of rationality.'

He now resolved to leave the country. Poverty and imprudence made that course desirable; and after the mortification he had met with, he no longer desired to remain at home. It cannot be stated with certainty when the idea of obtaining a situation of some kind on the other side of the Atlantic first presented itself to the mind of Burns. At Irvine he had become acquainted with men who were engaged in trade with the West Indies. Lockhart expressly states that Burns was introduced to a Dr Douglas of Jamaica by friends in Irvine. This is a mistake. Burns, as his letters prove, visited Dr Douglas in Ayr. As has already been seen, he had contemplated the possibility of having to 'herd the buckskin kye in Virginia,' as the result of his *liaison* with Elizabeth Paton. At this time, indeed, there was a close connection between Ayrshire and both Virginia and Jamaica. The younger sons of landed proprietors were in the habit of seeking to make fortunes either in the States or in the West Indies, by becoming planters on a con-

* 'What kind of a man was old Armour?' I asked Patrick; 'surely a person of consequence in Mauchline, judging from his treatment of Burns?' 'Ow, he was only a bit mason body, wha used to snuff a guid deal and gae afen tak' a bit dram!' 'Proud was he? or why did he object to Burns so strongly?' 'The thing was, he hated him,' he said, 'and would raither hae seen the deil himsel' comin' to the hoose to coort his dochter than him! He cu'dna bear the sicht o' 'm, and that was the way he did it!'—*Burns in Mossgiel.*

siderable scale.* When, therefore, the fortunes of Burns seemed desperate, it was natural that he should seek, through his more influential friends in Ayrshire, to secure a position of some kind beyond the 'Atlantic's roar.' Patrick Douglas of Garallan, an estate in the parish of Old Cumnock, had been trained to the medical profession; and was for a time surgeon in the West Lowland Fencible Regiment. In the list of shareholders in the ill-fated and short-lived Douglas and Heron Bank,† the collapse of which brought so many Ayrshire families to ruin or comparative poverty, he appears as 'surgeon in Air,' and as involved to the extent of £500. But although he lived for a time in Ayr, and was known as Dr Douglas,‡ he practised but little. He had succeeded to the family estate in 1776, and purchased a property in Jamaica which one of his brothers, Charles, personally superintended. Another brother, William, emigrated to Virginia, where his descendants are now living. Application was made to Dr Douglas, either by Burns, or more probably on his behalf by his friends. Dr Douglas seemed to have done for the poet all that was in his power. There is a tradition that when Burns was, or believed himself, in danger of imprisonment, his new friend actually arranged that he should sail direct from the port of Ayr, but that, at the last moment, Burns refused to go on board ship. Whether there be any truth in this story or not, Dr Douglas applied to his brother in Jamaica. The result was the offer to Burns by Charles Douglas of the post of bookkeeper on his estate, in the neighbourhood of Port Antonio (formerly St Francis), one of the leading shipping places on the north-east coast of the island, at a salary of £30 a year for three years. The situation

* Thus, to take only one family, the Cuthberts of Dalleagles, in New Cumnock, both Samuel, the laird, and his younger brother, James, were Virginia merchants; while of Samuel's sons, the eldest, William, emigrated, and died in Virginia; and the third, Samuel, died in St Lucia. It would seem, also, that Scotsmen generally were in great favour in Jamaica. In an elaborate work upon the island, which Burns may have seen, as it was published twelve years before he seriously contemplated emigration to the West Indies (*The History of Jamaica*, by Edward Long, 3 vols.; London: T. Lowndes, 1774), we read: 'Jamaica is greatly indebted to North Britain, as very near one-third of the inhabitants are either natives of that country, or descendants from those who were. Many have come from the same quarter every year, less in quest of fame than of fortunes; and such is their industry and address, that few of them have been disappointed in their aim. To say the truth, they are so clever and prudent in general, as, by an obliging behaviour, good sense, and zealous services, to gain esteem, and make their way through every obstacle.'

† It was started in 1769, and stopped payment in 1772.

‡ In Ayr he was, for some reason or other, commonly known as 'Dr Dougal.'

was a poor one, but Burns accepted it.* He had not, however, sufficient money to pay for his passage to Jamaica, and he was too proud to borrow from his friends. At this crisis, Gavin Hamilton advised him to publish his *Poems* by subscription, believing that his fame had already secured him a sufficient number of friends to make the sale of a small volume certain, and to a moderate extent profitable. Accordingly, 'proposals' or subscription-papers were thrown off and circulated amongst his friends.† The paper ran thus:

April 14*th*, 1786.

PROPOSALS for publishing, by subscription,
SCOTTISH POEMS, By Robert Burns.

The work to be elegantly printed, in one volume octavo. Price, stitched, three shillings. As the author has not the most distant mercenary view in publishing, as soon as so many subscribers appear as will defray the necessary expense, the work will be sent to the press.

Set out the brunt side of your shin,
For pride in poets is nae sin:
Glory 's the prize for which they rin,
And Fame 's their joe; mistress
And wha blaws best his horn shall win,
And wharefore no?—ALLAN RAMSAY.‡

We undersubscribers engage to take the above-mentioned work on the conditions specified.

A few letters and several poems help to illustrate the state of their author's mind about this time.

* Charles Douglas died in Jamaica. Patrick Douglas continued to the end of his life an enthusiastic admirer of Burns. The Rev. Hamilton Paul gives his name in the list of those who were present at the first meeting, held in 1801, to celebrate the anniversary of the poet's birth, in the cottage at Alloway, as 'Patrick Douglas, Esq., of Garallan, who patronised the poet in the early stages of his career.' He died in 1819. He was succeeded by his only daughter, Jane, who married Mr Hamilton Boswell of Knockroon, collector of taxes for Ayrshire. Mr Hamilton Douglas Boswell, great-grandson of Dr Patrick Douglas, is now proprietor of Garallan.

† The 'proposals' were reprinted in *The Glasgow Herald* of March 11, 1871, by the late Mr J. B. Greenshields of Kerse, Lesmahagow, who possessed the only known copy of them.

‡ From Ramsay's 'Answer' to Hamilton's 'Second Epistle' in *Seven Familiar Epistles, which passed between Lieut.* [*William*] *Hamilton* [*of Gilbertfield*] *and the Author*, 1719.—Ramsay thus explains the first line of the quotation, which, in all editions of his works, reads 'Set out the *burnt* side of your shin': 'As if one would say, "Walk stately with your toes out," an expression used when we would bid a person (merrily) look brisk.' That means apparently —'turn out the inside of your stockings, the side usually burnt a little by sitting before the fire.'

TO ROBERT AIKEN, ESQ., AYR.

MOSSGIEL, 3d *April* 1786.

DEAR SIR—I received your kind letter with double pleasure, on account of the *second* flattering instance of Mrs C.'s* notice and approbation. I assure you, I

Turn out the brunt side o' my shin,

as the famous Ramsay, of jingling memory, says, of such a patroness. Present her my most grateful acknowledgments, in your very best manner of telling truth. I have inscribed the following stanza on the blank-leaf of Miss More's works:†

Thou flatt'ring mark of friendship kind,
Still may thy pages call to mind
The dear, the beauteous, donor;
Tho' sweetly female ev'ry part,
Yet such a head, and more—the heart
Does both the sexes honor:
She show'd her taste refin'd and just,
When she selected thee;
Yet deviating, own I must,
For sae approving me:
But kind still I'll mind still
The *giver* in the gift;
I'll bless her, an' wiss her — wish
A Friend aboon the lift. — above the firmament

My proposals for publishing I am just going to send to the press. I expect to hear from you by the first opportunity. I am ever, Dear Sir, yours, ROBT. BURNESS.

TO JOHN BALLANTINE, ESQ., BANKER, AYR.‡

[*Between* 3d *and* 17*th April* 1786?]

HONORED SIR—My proposals came to hand last night, and knowing that you would wish to have it in your power to do me a service as early as any body, I enclose you half a sheet of them. I must consult you, first opportunity, on the propriety of sending my *quondam* friend, Mr Aiken, a copy. If he is now reconciled to my character as an honest man, I would do it with all my soul; but I would not be beholden to the noblest being ever God created, if he imagined me to be a rascal. *Apropos*, old Mr Armour prevailed with him to mutilate that unlucky

* It is said that 'Mrs C.' was really Lady Cunningham of Robertland, whose husband was one of the first of the Ayrshire lairds to recognise the genius of Burns.

† Hannah More (b. 1745, d. 1833) was then best known by her pastoral drama, *The Search after Happiness*, and her tragedies of *Percy* and *The Fatal Secret*.

‡ The authenticity of this letter, when it was first published by Allan Cunningham in 1834, was questioned by Mr Aiken's daughter. The tone of the letter throughout is, however, so characteristic of Burns, that it has been universally accepted as genuine.

paper yesterday. Would you believe it? though I had not a hope, nor even a wish to make her mine after her conduct; yet when he told me the names were cut out of the paper, my heart died within me, and he cut my veins with the news. Perdition seize her falsehood!

ROBT. BURNS.

At this time the poet and his brother finally changed the spelling of their name from Burness to the orthography common in Ayrshire.*

TO MR M'WHINNIE, WRITER, AYR.

MOSSGIEL, *17th April* 1786.

It is injuring *some* hearts, those hearts that *elegantly* bear the impression of the good Creator, to say to them you give them the trouble of obliging a friend; for this reason, I only tell you that I gratify my *own* feelings in requesting your friendly offices with respect to the inclosed,† because I know it will gratify *yours* to assist me in it to the utmost of your power.

I have sent you four copies, as I have no less than eight dozen, which is a great deal more than I shall ever need.

Be sure to remember a poor poet militant in your prayers. He looks forward with fear and trembling to that, to him, important moment which stamps the *die* with—with—with, perhaps the eternal disgrace of, My dear Sir, your humbled, afflicted, tormented ROBT. BURNS.

TO MR JOHN KENNEDY.

[MOSSGIEL, *20th April* 1786.]

SIR—By some neglect in Mr Hamilton, I did not hear of your kind request for a subscription paper till this day. I will not attempt any acknowledgement for this, nor the manner in which I see your name in Mr Hamilton's Subscription-list. Allow me only to say, Sir, I feel the weight of the debt.

I have here likewise enclosed a small piece,‡ the very latest of my productions. I am a good deal pleased with some sentiments myself, as they are just the native querulous feelings of a heart which, as the elegantly melting Gray says, 'melancholy has marked for her own.'

Our Race§ comes on apace—that much expected scene of revelry and mirth; but to me it brings no joy equal to that meeting with you [with] which you last flattered the expectation of, Sir, your indebted Servant, ROBT. BURNS.

* 'Burness,' it should be noted, is pronounced 'Bur'ness,' not 'Bur-ness'.'

† A copy of the 'Proposals.'

‡ The 'small piece' enclosed was 'The Gowan,' the title of which was afterwards altered to 'To a Mountain Daisy.'

§ Burns here alludes to the annual Mauchline Races, held near his farm. See p. 161.

TO JOHN ARNOT OF DALQUHATSWOOD, ESQ., INCLOSING A SUBSCRIPTION-BILL.

[*April* 1786.]

SIR—I have long wished for some kind of claim to the honour of your acquaintance, and since it is out of my power to make that claim by the least service of mine to you, I shall do it by asking a friendly office of you to me. I should be much hurt, Sir, if any one should view my poor Parnassian Pegasus in the light of a spur-galled Hack, and think that I wish to make a shilling or two by him. I spurn the thought.—

> It may—do—maun—do, Sir, wi' them wha
> Maun please the great folk for a wame-fou; meal, bellyful
> For me, sae laigh I need na bow, low
> For, Lord be thankit! I can plough:
> And when I downa yoke a naig, cannot—nag
> Then, Lord be thankit! I can beg.—

You will then, I hope Sir, forgive my troubling you with the inclosed, and spare a poor heart-crushed devil a world of apologies: a business he is very unfit for at any time; but at present, widowed as he is of every woman-giving comfort, he is utterly incapable of. Sad and grievous, of late, Sir, has been my tribulation, and many and piercing, my sorrows; and had it not been for the loss the world would have sustained in losing so great a poet, I had, ere now, done as a much wiser man, the famous Achitophel of long-headed memory, did before me, when 'he went home and set his house in order.' I have lost, Sir, that dearest earthly treasure, that greatest blessing here below, that last, best gift which compleated Adam's happiness in the garden of bliss, I have lost—I have lost—my trembling hand refuses its office, the frighted ink recoils up the quill—Tell it not in Gath—I have lost—a—a—a wife!

> Fairest of God's creation, last and best!
> *How art thou lost.*

You have doubtless, Sir, heard my story, heard it with all its exaggerations; but as my actions, and my motives for action, are peculiarly like myself, and that is peculiarly like nobody else, I shall just beg a leisure-moment and a spare-tear of you, untill I tell my own story my own way.

I have been all my life, Sir, one of the rueful-looking, long-visaged sons of Disappointment. A damned star has always kept my zenith, and shed its baleful influence, in that emphatic curse of the Prophet—'And behold whatsoever he doth, it shall not prosper!' I rarely hit where I aim; and if I want any thing, I am almost sure never to find it where I seek it. For instance, if my pen-knife is needed, I pull out twenty things—a plough-wedge, a horse nail, an old letter or a tattered rhyme, in short everything but my pen-knife; and that at last, after a painful, fruitless search, will be found in the unsuspected

corner of an unsuspected pocket, as if on purpose thrust out of the way. Still, Sir, I had long had a wishing eye to that inestimable blessing, a wife. . . . I was well aware though, that if my ill-starred fortune got the least hint of my connubial wish, my schemes would go to nothing. To prevent this, I determined to take my measures with such thought and forethought, such caution and precaution, that all the malignant planets in the Hemisphere should be unable to blight my designs. . . . 'Heaven and Earth, must I remember!' my damned star wheeled about to the zenith, by whose baleful rays Fortune took the alarm, and pouring in her forces on all quarters, front, flank, and rear, I was utterly routed. . . .

In short, Pharaoh at the Red Sea, Darius at Arbela, Pompey at Pharsalia, Edward at Bannockburn, Charles at Pultaway,* Burgoyne at Saratoga—no Prince, Potentate, or Commander, of ancient or modern unfortunate memory ever got a more shameful or more total defeat—

O horrible! O horrible! most horrible!

How I bore this, can only be conceived. All powers of recital labor far, far behind. There is a pretty large portion of bedlam in the composition of a poet at any time; but on this occasion, I was nine parts and nine tenths, out of ten, stark staring mad. At first, I was fixed in stuporific insensibility, silent, sullen, staring, like Lot's wife besaltified in the plain of Gomorha. But my second paroxysm chiefly beggars description. The rifted northern ocean, when returning suns dissolve the chains of winter, and loosening precipices of long accumulated ice tempest with hideous crash the foaming Deep—images like these may give some faint shadow of what was the situation of my bosom. My chained faculties broke loose; my maddening passions, roused to tenfold fury, bore over their banks with impetuous, resistless force, carrying every check and principle before them. Counsel was an unheeded call to the passing hurricane; Reason, a screaming elk in the vortex of Moskoestrom;† and Religion, a feebly-struggling beaver down the roarings of Niagara. I reprobated the first moment of my existence; execrated Adam's folly-infatuated wish for that goodly-looking, but poison-breathing, gift, which had ruined him, and undone me; and called on the womb of uncreated night to close over me and all my sorrows.

A storm naturally overblows itself. My spent passions gradually sank into a lurid calm; and by degrees I have subsided into the time-settled sorrow of the sable widower, who, wiping away the decent tear, lifts up his grief-worn eye to look—for another wife.—

Such is the state of man; to-day he buds
His tender leaves of hope; to-morrow blossoms,
And bears his blushing honors thick upon him;
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,
And nips his root, and then he falls as I do.

* Pultowa.

† Another name for Maelstrom.

Such, Sir, has been this fatal æra of my life.—'And it came to pass, that when I looked for sweet, behold bitter; and for light, behold darkness.'

But this is not all. Already the holy beagles, the houghmagandie pack, begin to snuff the scent, and I expect every moment to see them cast off, and hear them after me in full cry: but as I am an old fox, I shall give them dodging and doubling for it, and by and bye, I intend to earth among the mountains of Jamaica.

I am so struck, on a review, with the impertinent length of this letter, that I shall not increase it with one single word of an apology; but abruptly conclude with assuring you that I am, Sir, your, and Misery's most humble servt. [ROBT. BURNS.]

This extraordinary letter must be regarded as adequately expressing the tumult of Burns's feelings at this time, for later in life he transcribed it in a collection of his letters which he made for Mr Robert Riddel of Glenriddel,* and prefixed to it this note: 'The following was to one of the most accomplished of the sons of men that I ever met with—John Arnot of Dalquhatswood in Ayr-shire—alas! had he been equally prudent! It is a damning circumstance in human-life, that Prudence, insular and alone, without another virtue, will conduct a man to the most envied eminences in life, while, having every other good quality, and wanting that one, which at best is itself but a half virtue, will not save a man from the world's contempt and real misery, perhaps perdition. The story of the letter was this. I had got deeply in love with a young fair-one, of which proofs were every day *arising* more and more to view. I would gladly have covered my *Inamorata* from the darts of calumny with the conjugal shield, nay, I had actually made up some sort of Wedlock; but I was at that time deep in the guilt of being unfortunate, for which good and lawful objection, the lady's friends broke all our measures, and drove me *au désespoir*. I think that the letter was written about the latter end of 1785, as I was meditating to publish my Poems.'†

* It may be stated here, and once for all, that such names as 'Russel,' 'Riddel,' and 'Glenriddel,' seem to have been spelt indifferently with one 'l' and two 'l's,' both by Burns and by others. Thus 'Black Jock's' surname is spelt 'Russell' by his satirist, and 'Russel' in Dr Hew Scott's *Fasti Ecclesiæ Scoticanæ* (1866–71). In the case of all such words, the single 'l' represents the older and probably more accurate spelling.

† This last sentence, which is now printed for the first time, is notable mainly as showing how, after marriage, Burns's memory became confused as to the exact dates of the events—including the composition of his poems—which were crowded into the years 1785 and 1786. The circumstances mentioned in the letter to Arnot fit into the early portion of 1786, but not into the 'latter end of 1785.'

The following is the piece alluded to in the letter to Kennedy. It is evident that Burns was under the influence of more than one [illegible] when he wrote it, for while the opening verses are [illegible], in the last four there is not a word that can be [illegible] to the distinctive property of that language.

TO A MOUNTAIN DAISY,

ON TURNING ONE DOWN, WITH THE PLOUGH, IN APRIL 1786.

Wee, modest, crimson-tipped flow'r, — small
Thou's met me in an evil hour;
For I maun crush amang the stoure — must—dust
Thy slender stem:
To spare thee now is past my pow'r,
Thou bonie gem.

Alas! it's no thy neebor sweet,
The bonie Lark, companion meet!
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet! — wet
Wi' spreckl'd breast,
When upward-springing, blythe, to greet
The purpling East.

Cauld blew the bitter-biting North — cold
Upon thy early, humble birth;
Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth — peeped
Amid the storm,
Scarce rear'd above the Parent-earth
Thy tender form.

The flaunting flow'rs our Gardens yield,
High shelt'ring woods and wa's maun shield; — walls must
But thou, beneath the random bield — shelter
O' clod or stane, — stone
Adorns the histie stibble-field — dry, barren—stubble
Unseen, alane. — alone

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,
Thy snawie bosom sun-ward spread, — snowy
Thou lifts thy unassuming head
In humble guise;
But now the share uptears thy bed,
And low thou lies!

Such is the fate of artless Maid,
Sweet flow'ret of the rural shade!
By Love's simplicity betray'd,
And guileless trust,
Till she, like thee, all soil'd, is laid
Low i' the dust.

Such is the fate of simple Bard,
On life's rough ocean luckless starr'd!
Unskilful he to note the card * chart
Of prudent Lore,
Till billows rage, and gales blow hard,
And whelm him o'er!

Such fate to suffering Worth is giv'n,
Who long with wants and woes has striv'n,
By human pride or cunning driv'n
To Mis'ry's brink,
Till wrench'd of ev'ry stay but Heav'n,
He, ruin'd, sink!

Ev'n thou who mourn'st the Daisy's fate,
That fate is thine—no distant date;
Stern Ruin's plough-share drives, elate, †
Full on thy bloom,
Till crush'd beneath the furrow's weight,
Shall be thy doom!

THE LAMENT.

OCCASIONED BY THE UNFORTUNATE ISSUE OF A FRIEND'S AMOUR.‡

Alas! how oft does Goodness wound itself!
And sweet Affection prove the spring of Woe.—HOME.

O Thou pale Orb, that silent shines,
While care-untroubled mortals sleep!

* Compare Pope's 'Reason the card, but passion is the gale.'

† Compare— 'Stars rush and final Ruin fiercely drives
His ploughshare o'er creation.'—YOUNG.

‡ It is hardly necessary to say that the 'friend' was Burns himself.

Thou seest a wretch that inly pines,
And wanders here to wail and weep!
With Woe I nightly vigils keep,
Beneath thy wan, unwarming beam;
And mourn, in lamentation deep,
How life and love are all a dream.

I joyless view thy rays adorn
The faintly-markèd, distant hill:
I joyless view thy trembling horn,
Reflected in the gurgling rill,
My fondly-fluttering heart, be still!
Thou busy pow'r, Remembrance, cease!
Ah! must the agonizing thrill
For ever bar returning Peace!

No idly-feign'd poetic pains,
My sad, love-lorn lamentings claim;
No shepherd's pipe—Arcadian strains;
No fabled tortures, quaint and tame:
The plighted faith; the mutual flame;
The oft attested Pow'rs above;
The promis'd Father's tender name;
These were the pledges of my love!

Encircled in her clasping arms,
How have the raptur'd moments flown:
How have I wish'd for fortune's charms,
For her dear sake, and hers alone!
And must I think it! is she gone,
My secret heart's exulting boast?
And does she heedless hear my groan?
And is she ever, ever lost?

Oh! can she bear so base a heart,
So lost to Honor, lost to Truth,
As from the fondest lover part,
The plighted husband of her youth!
Alas! Life's path may be unsmooth!
Her way may lie thro' rough distress!

Then, who her pangs and pains will soothe,
  Her sorrows share and make them less?

Ye wingèd Hours that o'er us past,
  Enraptur'd more, the more enjoy'd,
Your dear remembrance in my breast,
  My fondly-treasur'd thoughts employ'd.
That breast, how dreary now, and void,
  For her too scanty once of room!
Ev'n ev'ry ray of hope destroy'd,
  And not a *Wish* to gild the gloom!

The morn that warns th' approaching day,
  Awakes me up to toil and woe:
I see the hours in long array,
  That I must suffer, lingering, slow.
Full many a pang, and many a throe,
  Keen recollection's direful train,
Must wring my soul, ere Phœbus, low,
  Shall kiss the distant, western main.

And when my nightly couch I try,
  Sore-harass'd out with care and grief,
My toil-beat nerves, and tear-worn eye,
  Keep watchings with the nightly thief:
Or if I slumber, Fancy, chief,
  Reigns haggard-wild, in sore affright:
Ev'n day, all-bitter, brings relief,
  From such a horror-breathing night.

O! thou bright Queen, who o'er th' expanse,
  Now highest reign'st, with boundless sway!
Oft has thy silent-marking glance
  Observ'd us, fondly-wand'ring, stray!
The time, unheeded, sped away,
  While Love's luxurious pulse beat high,
Beneath thy silver-gleaming ray,
  To mark the mutual-kindling eye.

Oh! scenes in strong remembrance set!
Scenes, never, never, to return!
Scenes, if in stupor I forget,
Again I feel, again I burn!
From ev'ry joy and pleasure torn,
Life's weary vale I 'll wander thro';
And hopeless, comfortless, I 'll mourn
A faithless woman's broken vow.

DESPONDENCY.

AN ODE.

Oppress'd with grief, oppress'd with care,
A burden more than I can bear,
I set me down and sigh:
O Life! thou art a galling load,
Along a rough, a weary road,
To wretches such as I!
Dim-backward as I cast my view,
What sick'ning Scenes appear!
What Sorrows *yet* may pierce me thro',
Too justly I may fear!
Still caring, despairing,
Must be my bitter doom;
My woes here shall close ne'er,
But with the closing tomb!

Happy ye sons of Busy-life,
Who, equal to the bustling strife,
No other view regard!
Ev'n when the wishèd *end*'s deny'd,
Yet while the busy *means* are ply'd,
They bring their own reward:
Whilst I, a hope-abandon'd wight,
Unfitted with an *aim*,
Meet ev'ry sad returning night,
And joyless morn the same.

You bustling, and justling,
Forget each grief and pain;
I listless, yet restless,
Find ev'ry prospect vain.

How blest the Solitary's lot,
Who, all-forgetting, all-forgot,
Within his humble cell,
The cavern wild with tangling roots,
Sits o'er his newly-gather'd fruits,
Beside his crystal well!
Or haply, to his ev'ning thought,
By unfrequented stream,
The ways of men are distant brought,
A faint-collected dream:
While praising, and raising
His thoughts to Heav'n on high,
As wand'ring, meand'ring,
He views the solemn sky.

Than I, no lonely Hermit plac'd
Where never human footstep trac'd,
Less fit to play the part,
The lucky moment to improve,
And *just* to stop, and *just* to move,
With self-respecting art:
But ah! those pleasures, Loves, and Joys,
Which I too keenly taste,
The *Solitary* can despise,
Can want, and yet be blest!
He needs not, he heeds not,
Or human love or hate,
Whilst I here must cry here,
At perfidy ingrate!

Oh! enviable, early days,
When dancing thoughtless Pleasure's maze,
To Care, to Guilt unknown!

How ill exchang'd for riper times,
To feel the follies, or the crimes,
Of others, or my own!
Ye tiny elves that guiltless sport,
Like linnets in the bush,
Ye * little know the ills ye court,
When manhood is your wish!
The losses, the crosses,
That *active man* engage!
The fears all, the tears all,
Of dim-declining *Age!*

TO RUIN.

All hail! inexorable lord!
At whose destruction-breathing word,
The mightiest empires fall!
Thy cruel, woe-delighted train,
The ministers of Grief and Pain,
A sullen welcome, all!
With stern-resolv'd, despairing eye,
I see each aimèd dart;
For one has cut my *dearest tye*,
And quivers in my heart.
Then low'ring, and pouring,
The *Storm* no more I dread;
Tho' thick'ning, and black'ning,
Round my devoted head.

And thou grim Pow'r, by Life abhorr'd,
While Life a *pleasure* can afford,
Oh! hear a wretch's pray'r!
No more I shrink appall'd, afraid;
I court, I beg thy friendly aid,
To close this scene of care!
When shall my soul, in silent peace,
Resign Life's *joyless* day?

* Fairies are often represented as desirous of becoming men.

My weary heart its throbbings cease,
Cold mould'ring in the clay?
No fear more, no tear more,
To stain my lifeless face,
Enclaspèd, and graspèd,
Within thy cold embrace!

SONG, COMPOSED IN SPRING.

TUNE—*Johnny's Gray Breeks.*

Again rejoicing Nature sees
Her robe assume its vernal hues,
Her leafy locks wave in the breeze
All freshly steep'd in morning dews.*

Chorus—And maun I still on Menie doat,
And bear the scorn that 's in her e'e!
For it 's jet, jet black, an' it 's like a hawk,
An' it winna let a body be!

In vain to me the cowslips blaw,
In vain to me the vi'lets spring;
In vain to me, in glen or shaw, wood
The mavis and the lintwhite sing. thrush—linnet

The merry Ploughboy cheers his team,
Wi' joy the tentie Seedsman stalks, heedful, cautious
But life to me 's a weary dream,
A dream of ane that never wauks. awakes

The wanton coot the water skims,
Amang the reeds the ducklings cry,

* Burns, on publishing this song in his first Edinburgh edition, 1787, wrote of the chorus: 'This Chorus is part of a song composed by a gentleman in Edinburgh, a particular friend of the Author's. *Menie* is the common abbreviation of *Mariamne*.' It has been conjectured that the 'particular friend' here alluded to is, like the 'friend' of the 'Lament,' Burns himself. Mr Scott Douglas goes so far as to say that 'the substitution of the name "Menie" for "Jeanie" was a necessary part of the little *ruse* he chose here to adopt.' At the same time, the tone of the chorus jars decidedly with that of the rest of the poem. It is difficult, therefore, to conceive of Burns writing these four lines, however much he may have desired to indicate through them that slighted love was the cause of his misery.

The stately swan majestic swims,
And every thing is blest but I.

The sheep-herd steeks his faulding slap, closes—gate in a fence to a sheepfold
And owre the moorlands whistles shill; shrill
Wi' wild, unequal, wand'ring step,
I meet him on the dewy hill.

And when the lark, 'tween light and dark,
Blythe waukens by the daisy's side, awakens
And mounts and sings on flittering wings,
A woe-worn ghaist I hameward glide.* ghost—homeward

Come Winter, with thine angry howl,
And raging bend the naked tree;
Thy gloom will soothe my cheerless soul,
When Nature all is sad like me!

The misery expressed in these poems is of too extreme a character to have been long predominant, at least in all its force, over so mercurial a temperament as that of Burns. At the beginning of May, he playfully writes Hamilton about a boy whom his friend had talked of taking off his hands, and who in the meantime had been spoken to with a view to another engagement.

TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ., MAUCHLINE

(RECOMMENDING A BOY).

MOSGAVILLE, *May* 3, 1786.

I hold it, Sir, my bounden duty
To warn you how that Master Tootie,
Alias, Laird M'Gaun,
Was here to hire you lad away
'Bout whom ye spak the tither day, spoke—other
An' wad hae done 't aff han': would have—at once
But lest he learn the callan tricks, teach—boy
An' faith I muckle doubt him, greatly

* The resemblance of this verse to a passage in the 'Mountain Daisy' will be observed.

Like scrapin' out auld Crummie's nicks,*
An' tellin' lies about them;
As lieve then I 'd have then, willingly
Your clerkship† he should sair, serve
If sae be, ye may be
Not fitted otherwhere.

Altho' I say 't, he 's gleg enough, sharp
An' 'bout a house that 's rude an' rough,
The boy might learn to *swear;*
But then wi' *you*, he 'll be sae taught,
An' get sic fair *example* straught, set directly before him
I hae na ony fear. have not
Ye 'll catechise him every quirk, intricate point
An' shore him weel wi' *hell;* threaten
An' gar him follow to the kirk— make
Ay when ye gang yoursel. go
If ye then, maun be then must
Frae hame this comin Friday, next
Then please sir, to lea'e, sir, leave
The orders wi' your lady.

My word of honor I hae gien,
In Paisley John's,‡ that night at e'en,
To meet the 'Warld's worm;'§
To try to get the twa to gree, agree
An' name the airles an' the fee, earnest-money
In legal mode an' form:
I ken he weel a *Snick* can draw,‖ play a trick
When simple bodies let him;
An' if a Devil be at a',
In faith he 's sure to get him.

* 'Tootie' lived in Mauchline, and dealt in cows. The age of these animals is marked by rings on their horns, which may be cut and polished off, so as to cause the cow to appear younger than she is. 'Crummie' is a name often applied to cows in Scotland.

† Gavin Hamilton was known as 'the clerk,' from his acting in this capacity to a number of local courts.

‡ Probably the Whitefoord Arms, whose landlord, 'John Dove, vintner,' was understood, as has already been noticed (p. 229), to have come from Paisley.

§ A term expressive of a mean, avaricious character.

‖ See note to the 'Address to the Deil,' p. 226.

To phrase you an' praise you, flatter
Ye ken your Laureat scorns:
The pray'r still, you share still,
Of grateful MINSTREL BURNS.

In this month, also, he addressed a poetical letter of advice to Andrew Hunter Aiken,* eldest son of his friend Robert Aiken, and then about to launch out into the world:

EPISTLE TO A YOUNG FRIEND.

May 1786.

I lang hae thought, my youthfu' friend,
A Something to have sent you,
Tho' it should serve nae other end no
Than just a kind memento;
But how the subject-theme may gang,
Let time and chance determine;
Perhaps, it may turn out a Sang;
Perhaps, turn out a Sermon.

Ye 'll try the world soon, my lad,
And Andrew dear, believe me,
Ye 'll find mankind an unco squad, strange crew
And muckle they may grieve ye: much
For care and trouble set your thought,
Ev'n when your end 's attained;
And a' your views may come to nought,
Where ev'ry nerve is strained.

I 'll no say men are villains a';
The real, harden'd wicked,
Wha hae nae check but human law,
Are to a few restricted: restricted

* Andrew Hunter Aiken became a merchant in Liverpool, and prospered. He died in 1831 at Riga, where he held the office of English consul. William Niven of Kirkbride—the 'Willie' of the Kirkoswald anecdotes—used to declare that Burns originally addressed this epistle to him, and it has even been said that the poet 'changed his intention owing to his being informed that his early companion was pervaded by the single idea of how to become rich.' At the same time, Niven never produced a copy of the original 'epistle' addressed to himself. All through the poem, too, the tone of Burns is that of a mentor addressing not a coeval like Niven, but a much younger man.

But Och! mankind are unco weak, very
An' little to be trusted;
If *Self* the wavering balance shake,
It 's rarely right adjusted!

Yet they wha fa' in Fortune's strife, fall
Their fate we should na censure,
For still th' important end of life,
They equally may answer:
A man may hae an honest heart,
Tho' Poortith hourly stare him; poverty
A man may tak a neebor's part,
Yet hae nae cash to spare him.

Ay free, aff han', your story tell, off-hand
When wi' a bosom crony; companion
But still keep something to yoursel
Ye scarcely tell to ony.
Conceal yoursel as weel 's ye can well
Frae critical dissection; from
But keek thro' ev'ry other man look searchingly
Wi' sharpen'd, sly inspection.

The sacred lowe o' weel-plac'd love, flame
Luxuriantly indulge it;
But never tempt th' illicit rove,
Tho' naething should divulge it:
I wave the quantum of the sin,
The hazard of concealing;
But Och! it hardens a' within,
And petrifies the feeling!

To catch Dame Fortune's golden smile,
Assiduous wait upon her;
And gather gear by ev'ry wile wealth
That 's justify'd by Honor:
Not for to hide it in a hedge,
Nor for a train-attendant;
But for the glorious privilege
Of being independent.

The fear o' Hell 's a hangman's whip,
To haud the wretch in order; hold, keep
But where ye feel your Honor grip,
Let that ay be your border:
Its slightest touches, instant pause—
Debar a' side-pretences;
And resolutely keep its laws,
Uncaring consequences.

The great Creator to revere,
Must sure become the Creature;
But still the preaching cant forbear,
And ev'n the rigid feature:
Yet ne'er with Wits profane to range,
Be complaisance extended;
An Atheist-laugh 's a poor exchange
For Deity offended!

When ranting round in Pleasure's ring, making merry
Religion may be blinded;
Or if she gie a random sting, give
It may be little minded;
But when on Life we 're tempest-driv'n,
A Conscience but a canker—
A correspondence fix'd wi' Heav'n,
Is sure a noble anchor!

Adieu, dear, amiable Youth!
Your heart can ne'er be wanting!
May Prudence, Fortitude, and Truth,
Erect your brow undaunting!
In ploughman phrase, 'God send you speed'
Still daily to grow wiser;
And may ye better reck the rede, attend to the advice
Than ever did th' Adviser.

ROBT. BURNS.

In a manuscript copy of this poem, dated 'Mossgiel, May 15th, 1786,' there occurs an additional stanza which the taste of the poet had doubtless observed to be below the rest in point and

ethical wisdom, and which he therefore subsequently omitted. It occurs immediately after the line, 'And petrifies the feeling!'

If ye hae made a step aside—
  Some hap mistake o'erta'en you,*
Yet still keep up a decent pride,
  And ne'er o'er far demean you;
Time comes wi' kind oblivious shade,
  And daily darker sets it;
And if nae mair mistakes are made,
  The warld soon forgets it.

It has often been remarked that a good deal of the teaching contained in the 'Epistle to a Young Friend'—especially 'keek thro' ev'ry other man wi' sharpen'd, sly inspection'—is directly opposed to the philosophy of life which Burns inculcates in some of his poems, and to his own practice. It should be borne in mind, however, that here he is not speaking from his own standpoint of 'The Vision' to brother poets or 'seers,' whose duty it is to proclaim the 'naked truth' in word and in act, but is giving advice to a young man about to take part in 'fortune's strife.' He forewarns the 'dear amiable youth' of the struggle before him, and forearms him with the secondary ethic of prudence or self-defence. But while he recommends 'keeking thro' ev'ry other man,' he does not recommend deception or swindling. This poem, in fact, is Burns's inculcation of the wisdom of the serpent in association with the harmlessness of the dove.

This month appears to have witnessed a marvellous reaction from the forlorn state indicated in the 'Lament.' Burns had been cast off by the Armours. In the moment of wounded pride he would appear, as the tone of his letter to Arnot shows, to have determined to look out for 'another wife,' and to have selected Mary Campbell, a girl in the service of his friend Hamilton. Burns's association with her is enveloped in mystery; he makes no allusion to 'Mary Campbell' in any of his poems or letters. Her story, as here given, is based on, and pieced from, various traditions, and cannot be regarded as a portion of the absolutely authentic history of Burns.

Mary Campbell was born, according to one of these traditions, in

* This line may be freely rendered, 'If through bad luck (hap) your sin has found you out.'

a thatched cottage, which is no longer standing, on the farm of Auchamore, in the parish of Dunoon.* The year 1768 is commonly given as that of her birth. But if she was the eldest of a family of eight born to 'Archibald Campbell in Daling and Agnes Campbell in Auchamore,' who 'gave in their names to be proclaimed in marriage' on the 19th June 1762, it is probable that she was born some years earlier than 1768. Her father is believed to have been a sailor in a revenue-cutter, the station of which being at Campbeltown in Kintyre, Argyllshire, he removed thither. Another story is that he commanded a coaling-sloop of his own, which traded between Campbeltown, Troon, and other ports on the Firth of Clyde. It is understood that Mary had spent some of her youthful years in the family of the Rev. David Campbell of Loch Ranza, in Arran, a relative of her mother. She was afterwards induced by another relative, a Mrs Isabella Campbell, who was housekeeper to a family in Ayrshire, to come to that county and take a situation as a servant. There is much obscurity about the movements of Mary in Ayrshire. It is said she was at one time dairy-maid at Coilsfield,† in the parish of Tarbolton, and that she secured this position through Miss Arbuckle, a Campbeltown lady who had married into the Eglinton family. She finally appears in Mauchline as nurse-maid to Alexander, second son of Gavin Hamilton, who was born 13th July 1785. Mrs Begg had no definite recollection of her at Mossgiel, except from the poet himself, when he told John Blane one day that 'Mary had refused to meet him in the old castle'—the dismantled tower of the priory near Mr Hamilton's house.‡

* Allan Cunningham and others have stated that she was born at Ardrossan. A third story is that she was born at Ardentinny, on the south-west shore of Loch Long, in a clachan which is now razed to the ground, and the site of which is about three hundred yards south of the Ardentinny Hotel. This tradition is embodied in a communication by Mr William Gunnyon to the *Kilmarnock Standard*, July 25, 1868.

† The property of Coilsfield, now Montgomerie, may have derived its name from the grave of King Coil, which is averred to be in the immediate neighbourhood of the mansion-house. It is styled 'Quyllisfield' in the charter of John de Graham, conveying it, with other lands, to the monks of Melrose in 1342. About 1640, it passed into the hands of Colonel James Montgomerie, fourth son of Alexander, sixth Earl of Eglintoun. It remained with the Eglintoun family till it was sold to Mr William Orr Paterson about the middle of this century. The present Montgomerie House, which was built 1806–1809, and which, embosomed among woods, stands on the southern bank of the Fail, must not be confounded with Burns's 'Castle o' Montgomerie.'

‡ 'At the adjacent parish church of Tarbolton, Mary used to worship on Sundays with other members of the Coilsfield household, although her acquaintance with the English language was somewhat imperfect; her pronunciation of it, indeed, was so tainted with

One of the most exquisitely pastoral of Burns's songs may here be introduced, although with some hesitation, because it apparently relates to his passion for Mary, although no reliable facts have been brought forward to decide whether it was partially or entirely written during the continuance of that passion or after her death. A daughter of Mrs Dunlop declared positively that she remembered hearing Burns say it was written upon Mary. If this recollection can be trusted, it must be inferred that the name Afton was adopted in place of Ayr by Burns *euphoniæ gratiâ*, and was suggested to him by the beautiful valley of Glen Afton, near New Cumnock, the paternal property of Mrs Stewart of Stair.*

the Gaelic accent that she soon obtained the more familiar name of "Highland Mary." Other celebrities in Burns's day, such as John Wilson ("Dr Hornbook"), James Humphrey, and John Lees, were numbered among the congregation that met in the Clachan church. Burns, who resided in a farm almost equidistant from the kirks of Mauchline and Tarbolton, seems to have divided his Sabbaths between these kirks according to other considerations, as has been hinted, than the reputation of their preachers or the quality of their sermons. In the latter church, and shortly after her arrival, the poet saw the interesting young stranger, was charmed with her appearance and propriety of conduct, and was, of course, desirous of making her acquaintance. One of Mary's noticeable habits during the church service was a close attention to her Bible while the minister was reading from it, or referring to passages illustrative of his text. It has been conjectured that her loyal observance of this important duty may have suggested to the mind of the poet the exchange of Bibles which took place on a subsequent and memorable occasion. There survived till very recently, in the neighbourhood of Montgomerie Castle, an elderly and intelligent gentleman, who learned from a contemporary of the period the circumstances in which Burns sought and obtained an introduction to his new "fancy." In those days a pining swain might have an opportunity of unburdening his overweighted feelings towards the object of his regard by the aid of a blackfoot—a kind of official who could in many cases promote a crony's interests and attend to his own at the same time. In the course of a visit to his sweetheart, a blackfoot could secure her influence with a female fellow-servant to consent to a meeting with a companion of his who was sighing for an interview. It was thus that Burns got the coveted introduction—a favour which his ready wit, his fascinating eyes, and impassioned eloquence improved to the utmost. It so happens that the individual who in early youth did such yeoman service to Burns in the capacity of blackfoot, exercised in a later age his valuable talents in favour of the gentleman I have referred to. A series of extremely diverting incidents connected with the visits of Burns and of his guide, philosopher, and friend to their respective charmers, were among the old gentleman's favourite reminiscences.'—Communication by Mr Archibald Munro to the *Scotsman*, October 20, 1891.

* Dr Currie stated that this song was composed in honour of Mrs Stewart. In a paper by Gilbert Burns, communicating to George Thomson memoranda of the subjects of his brother's songs, 'Flow gently, sweet Afton,' is thus noticed: 'The poet's Highland Mary.' The fact that Mrs Stair's maiden name was *Catharine* Gordon tells against Currie's theory, though—when we consider the license Burns allowed himself in connection with the names of his heroines—it cannot be considered fatal. The poem is certainly more descriptive of the scenery of Glen Afton than of the surroundings of Afton Lodge, near Tarbolton, which Mrs Stewart built in 1790, two years before 'Afton Water' appeared in Johnson's *Museum*.

AFTON WATER.

I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not, nor awake my love—my dove, my undefiled! The flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of the birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.—*R. B.*

TUNE—*The Yellow-haired Laddie.*

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes, hill-slopes
Flow gently, I 'll sing thee a song in thy praise;
My Mary 's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

Thou stock dove whose echo resounds thro' the glen,
Ye wild whistling blackbirds in yon thorny den,
Thou green crested lapwing thy screaming forbear
I charge you disturb not my slumbering Fair.

How lofty, sweet Afton, thy neighbouring hills,
Far mark'd with the courses of clear, winding rills;
There daily I wander as noon rises high,
My flocks and my Mary's sweet Cot in my eye.

How pleasant thy banks and green vallies below,
Where, wild in the woodlands, the primroses blow;
There oft as mild ev'ning weeps over the lea,
The sweet-scented birk shades my Mary and me. birch

Thy crystal stream, Afton, how lovely it glides,
And winds by the cot where my Mary resides;
How wanton thy waters her snowy feet lave,
As, gathering sweet flowerets, she stems thy clear wave.

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,
Flow gently, sweet River, the theme of my lays;
My Mary 's asleep by thy murmuring stream,
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.*

* Burns here translates very accurately the description given in the *Statistical Account* of the parish of New Cumnock, of the junction of the Afton and the Nith: 'Flowing northwards, of local origin, and falling into the Nith, the small stream called the Afton forms a beautiful valley, and is overlooked by richly sylvan banks.'

After the intimacy between Burns and Mary had ripened into love, it was agreed that she should go home for a short time to her friends in the Highlands, to arrange for her marriage. But before going, they had a farewell meeting on the second Sunday of May, the 14th of the month, in a sequestered spot on the banks of the Ayr. The day (*but not the date*) and the place are indicated by himself. It is possible that the lovers did not confine themselves to the banks of the Ayr, but wandered into the valley of the Fail, which bounds part of the Coilsfield estate.* However this may be, Cromek, writing, it is said, on information supplied to him by Burns's relatives, avers that 'their adieu was performed with all those simple and striking ceremonials which rustic sentiment has devised to prolong tender emotions and to impose awe. The lovers stood on each side of a small purling brook—they laved their hands in the limpid stream—and holding a Bible between them, pronounced their vows to be faithful to each other.' Mary presented to her lover a small Bible in one volume. Burns gave her in exchange a more handsome one in two volumes. The volumes given to Mary have been preserved, and are now in the monument at Ayr. On a blank-leaf of the first is inscribed, in Burns's handwriting, 'And ye shall not swear by My Name falsely—I am the Lord.—*Levit.* xix. 12.' On the second volume: 'Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine Oath.—*Matth.* v. 33.' On the fly-leaf of each volume his name had apparently been inscribed, together with his *mason-mark*. The lovers parted—never to meet again.

The date of Burns's attachment to Highland Mary, and several of the circumstances connected with it, were long, and to a great extent still are, enveloped in obscurity. In January 1850, the late Mr William Scott Douglas read before the Society of Scottish

* The Rev. Hamilton Paul, one of the earliest biographers of Burns, fixes 'the spot where the Fail disembogues itself into the Ayr' as—'there or thereabout'—the scene of the parting between Burns and Mary. Mr Archibald Munro, in an article contributed to the *Scotsman* in 1891, suggests that the plighting scene took place on the Alton, a tributary of the Fail. The Rev. Eric Robertson, who believes that when Mary parted from Burns she was a servant at Stairaird, a farm in the parish of Stair, on the Barskimming estate, a little farther up the Ayr than the Montgomerie lands reach, and on the other (south) side of the river, has suggested (*Annual Burns Chronicle*, 1893) that there may be truth in 'a hitherto faint but undoubted tradition that Burns and Mary plighted their troth on the banks of Mauchline Burn, which flows into the Ayr at the very foot of the crag on which Stairaird farm is perched.' In this connection it should be remembered that Burns himself has said nothing about the scene 'on each side of a small purling brook.'

Antiquaries an elaborate paper, making it appear that the affair was, what had never been hitherto suspected, but an interlude in Burns's attachment to Jean Armour. He argued that it could not have been, as several biographers had surmised, a strictly early or juvenile attachment, as the Bible was published in 1782,* and the imperfect signature of the poet is followed by a word which appears to have been originally 'Mossgavill'—the name of a place with which he had no connection till Martinmas 1783, when he was nearly twenty-five years of age, and where he did not reside till March of the ensuing year. Mr Douglas also endeavoured to trace the connection between this attachment and the design of going to the West Indies, a design of which we hear definitely at no earlier period of his life than the spring of 1786. This connection appears strongly in a song which afterwards appeared in Johnson's *Scots Musical Museum* (vol. ii.):

THE HIGHLAND LASSIE, O.

Nae gentle dames, tho' ne'er sae fair,†
Shall ever be my muse's care;
Their titles a' are empty show;
Gie me my Highland Lassie, O.

Chorus—Within the glen sae bushy, O,
Aboon the plain sae rashy, O, full of rushes
I set me down wi' right gude will, sat down
To sing my Highland Lassie, O.

O were yon hills and vallies mine,
Yon palace and yon gardens fine!
The world then the love should know
I bear my Highland Lassie, O.

But fickle fortune frowns on me,
And I maun cross the raging sea; must

* The Bible was printed by the 'Assigns of Alexander Kincaid, His Majesty's printer.'

† 'Gentle' is here used in opposition to 'simple.' 'Gentle dames' means ladies of aristocratic birth.

But while my crimson currents flow,
I love my Highland Lassie, O.

Altho' thro' foreign climes I range,
I know her heart will never change,
For her bosom burns with honor's glow,
My faithful Highland Lassie, O.

For her I 'll dare the billow's roar;
For her I 'll trace a distant shore;
That Indian wealth may lustre throw
Around my Highland Lassie, O.

She has my heart, she has my hand,
By secret troth and honor's band!
Till the mortal stroke shall lay me low,
I 'm thine, my Highland Lassie, O.

Farewel the glen sae bushy, O!
Farewel the plain sae rashy, O!
To other lands I now must go
To sing my Highland Lassie, O!

The poet, in the notes in Johnson's *Museum* which he made for Captain Riddel of Glenriddel,* says of this song, it 'was a composition of mine in very early life, before I was at all known in the world. My Highland lassie was a warm-hearted, charming young creature as ever blessed a man with generous love.' And then he relates his story of their parting. All the circumstances detailed in this ballad—its author's love, his desire of fortune for the sake of the loved one, and especially his being compelled by the frowns of fortune to cross the raging sea—entirely answer to the crisis with which Burns was now confronted, and they do not quite answer to any other period of his life of which we have any knowledge.

Burns further told George Thomson in 1792, 'In my very early years, when I was thinking of going to the West-Indies, I took the following farewell of a dear girl:'

* Cromek's *Reliques*.

WILL YE GO TO THE INDIES, MY MARY?

TUNE—*Will ye go to the Ewe-buchts, Marion?*

Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
And leave auld Scotia's shore?
Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary,
Across th' Atlantic's roar?*

O sweet grows the lime and the orange,
And the apple on the pine;
But a' the charms o' the Indies
Can never equal thine.

I hae sworn by the Heavens to my Mary,
I hae sworn by the Heavens to be true;
And sae may the Heavens forget me,
When I forget my vow!

O plight me your faith, my Mary,
And plight me your lily-white hand;
O plight me your faith, my Mary,
Before I leave Scotia's strand.

We hae plighted our troth, my Mary,
In mutual affection to join,
And curst be the cause that shall part us!
The hour, and the moment o' time!

But for the phrases, 'very early life,' and 'my very early years,' there could be no difficulty in assigning 'The Highland Lassie' and 'Will ye go to the Indies, my Mary?' which is evidently another expression of the same passion, to the year 1786; but Mr Douglas contended that either Burns felt as if the lapse of six years had brought him out of youth into middle life, or he wished to maintain a mystery regarding the story of Mary. For his desire to keep the matter in obscurity various reasons may be assigned. It may well be believed in particular that he disliked to bring to his wife's knowledge an attachment which all but separated them for life.

* The first verse is not to be read as expressing a desire of the poet that Mary should accompany him to the West Indies: the rest of the poem makes the idea of a parting and farewell quite clear. The verse may be accepted simply as a variation of the song whose air was adopted.

It has already been observed that there were amatory underplots in the drama of Burns's life, and it is not very surprising that he should be found at this time taking leave of a third girl in terms resembling those employed in the 'Highland Lassie,' and which involve the same allusions to his approaching exile from his native country:

FAREWELL TO ELIZA.

TUNE—*Gilderoy.*

From thee, Eliza, I must go,
And from my native shore:
The cruel fates between us throw
A boundless ocean's roar:
But boundless oceans, roaring wide,
Between my love and me,
They never, never can divide
My heart and soul from thee.

Farewell, farewell, Eliza dear,
The maid that I adore!
A boding voice is in mine ear,
We part to meet no more!
But the latest throb that leaves my heart,
While Death stands victor by,
That throb, Eliza, is thy part,
And thine that latest sigh!

This song appeared in the first edition of his poems, and the identity of the girl seems to be fairly well attested by his saying in a letter, written on his return to Mauchline in June 1787, that he had called for his 'quondam Eliza.' It is generally believed that she was Betty Miller, one of the Mauchline belles, who, as has been seen (p. 138), married a Mr Templeton, and died shortly after her marriage. She appears to have been an amiable girl, and it is not improbable that she had sympathised with Burns during his various distresses. Gratitude may have inspired a kind of affection, which, as usual, he expressed in the language of adoring love.*

* Another 'Betty' figures in the list of the loves that Ayrshire legend has assigned to Burns. It is still believed in the parish of Stair that he courted and was accepted by Betty Campbell, a servant in Stair House, that he gave her 'lines,' and that these were destroyed by the girl after a quarrel with the poet.

The idea of taking Mary along with him into exile was soon given up by Burns, if it were ever seriously entertained. Within a very few weeks after his parting from her, we find him, in a letter to a friend, speaking of Jean as still holding sway over his affections. He tells how he had been vainly endeavouring, by 'dissipation and riot,' to drive her out of his head, notwithstanding that he now regarded her as even more unfaithful than ever. At the end of March, and, probably, to escape from her father's displeasure, Jean went to Paisley, to stay for some time with an uncle, Andrew Purdie, a carpenter; and here she found a friendly shelter.* She knew no other person in Paisley except a young weaver named Robert Wilson, who was a native of Mauchline, and who had often danced with her at balls there. Finding herself in want of money, she applied for assistance to Wilson, whose trade was in those days so prosperous as to ensure him a fair income. The young man visited her, and advanced the sum she required. He repeated the visit several times, and in consequence a report reached Mauchline that Jean and he were likely to be married. In reality, all that Wilson said to Jean was that, if she did not marry Burns, he would never take a wife while she remained disengaged. The story, however, reached the ears of Burns in its most exaggerated form.†

* The following extracts from Mauchline kirk-session records are curious as indicating a desire on the part of Jean's mother to conceal her daughter's disgrace even at this time:

'*April 2d*, 1786.—The session being informed that Jean Armour, an unmarried woman, is said to be with child, and that she has gone off from the place of late, to reside elsewhere, the session think it their duty to enquire . . . But appoint James Lamie and William Fisher to speak to the parents.'

'*April 9th*, 1786.—James Lamie reports that he spoke to Mary Smith, mother to Jean Armour, who told him that she did not suspect her daughter to be with child, that she was gone to Paisley to see her friends, and would return soon.'

'*June 18th*, 1786.—Jean Armour, called, compeared not, but sent a letter directed to the minister:

"'I am heartily sorry that I have given and must give your session trouble on my account. I acknowledge that I am with child, and Robert Burns in Mossgiel is the father. I am, with great respect, your most humble servant, (*Signed*) "JEAN ARMOUR.

"MACHLIN, 13*th June* 1786."'

† In 'Some Aspects of Robert Burns,' an essay which Robert Louis Stevenson contributed to the *Cornhill Magazine* (October 1879), and subsequently included in his *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* (1882), the statement is made in connection with Burns's first meeting with Jean Armour: 'This facile and empty-headed girl had nothing more in view than a flirtation; and her heart, from the first and on to the end of her story, was engaged by another man.' In support of this statement no evidence whatever is offered. It is highly probable that Mr Stevenson was misled by the story as to the Paisley weaver having offered to marry Jean *after* her quarrel with Burns.

TO MR DAVID BRICE, GLASGOW.

DEAR BRICE—I received your message by G. Paterson, and as I am very throng [busy] at present, I just write to let you know that there is such a worthless, rhyming reprobate as your humble servant still in the land of the living, though I can scarcely say in the place of hope. I have no news to tell you that will give me any pleasure to mention, or you to hear.

Poor ill-advised, ungrateful Armour came home on Friday last.* You have heard all the particulars of that affair, and a black affair it is. What she thinks of her conduct now, I don't know; one thing I know—she has made myself completely miserable. Never man loved, or rather adored, a woman more than I did her; and, to confess truth between you and me, I do still love her to distraction after all, though I won't tell her so if I see her, which I don't want to do. My poor dear unfortunate Jean! how happy have I been in her arms! It is not the losing her that makes me so unhappy, but for *her* sake I feel most severely: I foresee she was in the road to—I am afraid—*eternal* ruin. And those who made so much noise, and showed so much grief, at the thought of her being *my wife* may some day see her connected in such a manner as may give them more real cause for vexation. I am sure I do not wish it. May Almighty God forgive her ingratitude and perjury to me, as I from my very soul forgive her: and may His grace be with her, to bless her in all her future life! I can have no nearer idea of the place of eternal punishment than what I have felt in my own breast on her account. I have tried often to forget her: I have run into all kinds of dissipation and riot, mason-meetings, drinking-matches, and other mischief, to drive her out of my head, but all in vain. And now for a grand cure: the ship is on her way home that is to take me out to Jamaica; and then, farewell dear old Scotland! and farewell dear, ungrateful Jean! for never, never will I see you more.

You will have heard that I am going to commence poet in print; and to-morrow my works go to the press. I expect it will be a volume about two hundred pages—it is just the last foolish action I intend to do; and then turn a wise man as fast as possible. I shall expect a letter from you first leisure moment, and believe me, dear Brice, your friend and well-wisher, ROBT. BURNS.†

MOSSGIEL, 12*th June* 1786.

* Friday, 9th June.

† This remarkable letter is now given for the first time in its entirety, and from what there is every reason to believe to be the original, which is part of the Watson Bequest in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. Hitherto the passage in the second paragraph, beginning 'And those who made so much noise,' and ending 'I do not wish it,' had been omitted. It is of great importance, as it proves the extraordinary character of the rumours as to Jean's conduct which had reached Burns's ears, and confirms his views of her relatives' dislike to the prospect of her becoming his wife. Of the David Brice, to whom the letter was written, and who appears to have been on very intimate terms with Burns, nothing definite

TO MR JAMES BURNESS, MONTROSE.

MY DEAR SIR—I wrote you about three half-twelve months ago by post, and I wrote you about a year ago by a private hand, and I have not had the least return from you. I have just half-a-minute to write you by an Aberdeen gentleman of my acquaintance who promises to wait upon you with this on his arrival, or soon after: I intend to send you a letter accompanied with a singular curiosity* in about five or six weeks hence. I shall then write you more at large; meanwhile you are just to look on this as a *memento me*. I hope all friends are well. I am ever, my dear Sir, your affectionate cousin, ROBT. BURNESS.†

MOSSGIEL, near MAUCHLIN, *July 5th*, 1786.

It serves to add to the strange confusion of the love-affairs of Burns, that a canzonet in which the same ideas we have already seen brought forward regarding an eternal constancy to 'Mary' and 'Eliza' are worked up in favour of Jean.

THE NORTHERN LASS.

Tho' cruel fate should bid us part,
  Far as the pole and line;
Her dear idea round my heart
  Should tenderly entwine.
Tho' mountains rise, and deserts howl,
  And oceans roar between;
Yet, dearer than my deathless soul,
  I still would love my Jean.

There is no positive evidence that this slight lyric was composed in 1786 (see page 135); a parting 'far as the pole and line' is suspicious. The piece was printed in the second volume of Johnson's *Museum*, which was in the engraver's hands during the later half of 1787, and appeared in the beginning of 1788.

is known, except that he was a Mauchline man who had become a shoemaker in Glasgow. A Thomas Brice, from Glasgow, who settled in Mauchline as a weaver and shoemaker about the end of last century, and ultimately became beadle and gravedigger, may have been a son of David Brice. For a time he went by the name of Thomas Kirkland. Latterly, however, he resumed the name of Thomas Brice.

* No doubt the 'curiosity' was a copy of the Kilmarnock edition.

† Burns here returns, out of deference to his cousin, to the mode of spelling the family name which he and Gilbert had abandoned a few months previously.

In the midst of the cross-fire of various affections, and in spite of depression caused by the prospects of exile, the pen of Burns was not inactive. 'On Tuesday [May 23, 1786] there was a meeting of the Highland Society at London for the encouragement of the fisheries in the Highlands, &c. Three thousand pounds were immediately subscribed by eleven gentlemen present, for this particular purpose. The Earl of Breadalbane * informed the meeting that five hundred persons had agreed to emigrate from the estates of M'Donald of Glengary; that they had subscribed money, purchased ships, &c., to carry their design into effect. The noblemen and gentlemen agreed to co-operate with government to frustrate their design; and to recommend to the principal noblemen and gentlemen in the Highlands to endeavour to prevent emigration, by improving the fisheries, agriculture, and manufactures, and particularly to enter into a subscription for that purpose.' Such is an announcement in the *Edinburgh Advertiser* of 30th May. Burns took up the matter otherwise, and wrote, though he did not publish, an

ADDRESS OF BEELZEBUB.

To the Right Honorable the Earl of Breadalbine, President of the Right Honorable and Honorable the Highland Society, which met on the 23d of May last, at the Shakespeare, Covent Garden, to concert ways and means to frustrate the designs of FIVE HUNDRED HIGHLANDERS who, as the Society were informed by Mr M'Kenzie of Applecross,† were so audacious as to attempt an escape from their lawful lords and masters whose property they were, by emigrating from the lands of Mr M'Donald of Glengary to the wilds of Canada, in search of that fantastic thing—LIBERTY.

Long Life, my lord, an' health be yours,
Unskaith'd by hunger'd Highland boors; Unharmed
Lord grant nae duddie, desperate beggar, ragged
Wi' dirk, claymore, and rusty trigger,

* John Campbell, fourth Earl of Breadalbane, was born in 1762, was one of the representative peers of Scotland from 1784 to 1802, was created Baron Breadalbane of Taymouth Castle in 1806, was raised to the marquisate of Breadalbane in 1831, and died in 1834.

† Thomas M'Kenzie of Applecross (a considerable estate in the west of Ross-shire), had a reputation for generosity. Knox, in his *Tour of the Highlands*, written about this very time, mentions an act of M'Kenzie's precisely contrary in its character to the motive which the poet attributes to him. 'Perceiving,' says Knox, 'the bad policy of servitude in the Highlands, Mr M'Kenzie has totally relinquished all the feudal claims upon the labour of his tenants, whom he pays, with the strictest regard to justice, at the rate of sevenpence or eightpence for every day employed upon his works.'

May twin auld Scotland o' a life — deprive
She likes—as lambkins* like a knife.

Faith, you and Applecross were right
To keep the Highland hounds in sight:
I doubt na! they wad bid nae better, — propose
Than let them ance out owre the water, — over
Then up amang thae lakes and seas: — those
They 'll mak what rules and laws they please:
Some daring Hancock, or a Franklin,
May set their Highland bluid a-ranklin;
Some Washington again may head them,
Or some Montgomery, fearless, lead them;
Till (God knows what may be effected
When by such heads and hearts directed),
Poor dunghill sons of dirt an' mire
May to Patrician rights aspire!
Nae sage North now, nor sager Sackville,
To watch and premier o'er the pack vile,— — rule
An' whare will ye get Howes and Clintons †
To bring them to a right repentance—
To cowe the rebel generation, — frighten
An' save the honor o' the nation?

They, an' be d—mn'd! what right hae they
To meat, or sleep, or light o' day?

* Variation in *Edinburgh Magazine*—'Butchers.' 'Lambkins' is generally accepted as being in harmony with the ironical strain of the poem.

† Burns introduces in this poem the names of several of the most prominent figures, both on the British and on the American side, in the War of Independence. The parts played by Franklin (1706–1790), Washington (1732–1799), and Lord North (1732–1792) are too familiar to require detailed description. John Hancock (1737–1793) was President of the Congress of Philadelphia, and is understood to have been the first to sign the Declaration of Independence. Major-general Richard Montgomery (1736–1775), a native of Ireland, and at one time a distinguished soldier in the British army, 'sadly and reluctantly' joined the American side in 1775. He was killed while leading an attack on Quebec on 31st December of that year. George Viscount Sackville (1716–1785) fought at Dettingen and Fontenoy, and fell into disgrace for disobeying orders at the battle of Minden. He was restored to royal favour in 1775, and was Secretary of State for the Colonies during the war. General William Howe (1729–1814) succeeded General Gage in 1775 as commander-in-chief of the British forces in America, commanded at Bunker's Hill, captured New York, defeating Washington at White Plains and Brandywine, but was superseded by Sir Henry Clinton in 1778, because he had not destroyed the American force at Valley Forge. Sir Henry Clinton (1738–1795) captured Charleston two years after being appointed Howe's successor, but after the capitulation of Cornwallis at Yorktown in 1781, he resigned his command and returned to England.

Far less—to riches, pow'r, or freedom,
But what your lordship likes to gie them?

But hear, my lord! Glengary, hear!
Your hand 's owre light on them, I fear; — too
Your factors, grieves, trustees, and bailies, — land-stewards—farm-overseers
I canna say but they do gaylies; — pretty well
They lay aside a' tender mercies,
An' tirl the hallions to the birses; — strip—clowns, worthless fellows—hairy hides
Yet while they 're only poind't and herriet, — distrained—plundered
They 'll keep their stubborn Highland spirit:
But smash them! crash them a' to spails, — chips
An' rot the dyvors i' the jails! — bankrupts
The young dogs, swinge them to the labour; — beat
Let wark an' hunger mak them sober! — work
The hizzies, if they 're oughtlins faussont, — girls—at all handsome
Let them in Drury-lane be lesson'd!
An' if the wives an' dirty brats — children
Come thiggin at your doors an' yetts, — begging—gates
Flaffin wi' duds, an' grey wi' beese, — Fluttering—rags—vermin
Frightin awa' your deucks an' geese, — ducks
Get out a horsewhip or a jowler, — bulldog
The langest thong, the fiercest growler,
An' gar the tatter'd gipseys pack — compel—begone
Wi' a' their bastards on their back!

Go on, my Lord! I lang to meet you, — long
An' in my 'house at hame' to greet you;
Wi' common lords ye shanna mingle, — shan't
The benmost neuk beside the ingle, — innermost corner—fireside
At my right han' assigned your seat,
'Tween Herod's hip an' Polycrate;*

* Variation— 'At my right han' assigned your seat is,
'Tween Herod's hip an' Polycrates'.'

Polycrates was 'tyrant' of Samos from about 536 to 522 B.C. There seems to be no covert allusion in this line to the familiar story of Polycrates—his success in war, the envy cherished towards him by the gods, the fatal signet-ring thrown into the sea, and restored to him by a fisherman who had discovered it in the belly of a fish, and his death at the hands of a personal enemy. Burns merely places the 'tyrants' of Jerusalem and Samos on a footing of equality in infamy, as he does two lines further with the rival Spanish conquerors of South America. The mention of Polycrates, however, is an evidence of Burns's range of reading, and an illustration of his habit of associating certain person-

Or (if you on your station tarrow), are not satisfied with the position given you
Between Almagro and Pizarro,
A seat, I 'm sure ye're weel deservin't;
An' till ye come—your humble servant,

BEELZEBUB.*

HELL, *June 1st, Anno Mundi* 5790 [A.D. 1786].

The reception of the 'proposals' had been so cordial, that the printing of the poems was determined on. There is a tradition that Burns asked Messrs Dunlop & Wilson, of Glasgow, then recognised as the leading bookselling and printing firm in the West of Scotland, to undertake the publication of his volume, and that they declined. The story, however, has never been verified; and, considering that it was largely owing to the enthusiasm of Burns's friends in Kilmarnock that he was induced to venture into print at all, the probability is that he took their advice in choosing a publisher. At all events, the printing was undertaken by John Wilson, a native of Kilmarnock, who had started in business in 1780. According to common belief in Kilmarnock to-day, his printing press was situated in the STAR INN CLOSE, now what is known as a 'through-gaun,' from Waterloo Street to a point almost in a line with the centre of Kilmarnock Cross. On entering the CLOSE from Waterloo Street, there is seen on the left a stair leading to a pawnbroker's establishment, on the third floor of which is a room that is affirmed to be the stance of the machine which gave the Kilmarnock edition to the world. If this view of the locality of Wilson's printing-press be correct, Burns was, while engaged in correcting the proofs of his poems, within easy distance of the residences of several of his friends, in particular, Goldie, Bailie Gregory, and Tam Samson.† He was still active

ages with certain historical periods. He here identifies Polycrates, whom a classical dictionary of to-day terms 'one of the most fortunate, ambitious, and treacherous of the Greek tyrants,' with 'tyranny' in the sense of cruelty, much as, later on, he is found, in his autobiographical letter to Moore, identifying the 'Munny Begum' with British rapacity in India—mainly, no doubt, because the Begums of Oudh figured prominently in the story of Warren Hastings, who was impeached the year before that letter was written.

* This poem first appeared in the *Edinburgh Magazine* for February 1818. A copy in the poet's handwriting is in the collection of manuscripts which was the property of the late Mr W. F. Watson, Edinburgh, and is now in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

† John Wilson, who was born in the same year as Burns, left Kilmarnock in 1803 for Ayr, where, along with his brother Peter, he founded the earliest of Ayrshire newspapers, the *Ayr Advertiser*. The brothers at the same time carried on a general business as publishers, a special feature of it being the number of editions of the classics which they issued. John

in the preparation of pieces which might see the light; and it is remarkable how many of these were of a lively cast. One was of a political character, and on that account, as will be seen from a letter to Mrs Dunlop (April 30, 1787), was disapproved of by some of his friends.

A DREAM.

Thoughts, words, and deeds, the Statute blames with reason;
But surely *Dreams* were ne'er indicted Treason.

On reading, in the public papers, the 'Laureate's Ode,'* with the other parade of June 4th, 1786, the Author was no sooner dropt asleep, than he imagined himself transported to the Birth-day Levee; and, in his dreaming fancy, made the following Address.

Guid-mornin to your Majesty!
May heav'n augment your blisses
On ev'ry new birth-day ye see,
A humble poet wishes!
My bardship here, at your Levee
On sic a day as this is,
Is sure an uncouth sight to see,
Amang thae birth-day dresses — those
Sae fine this day.

I see ye 're complimented thrang, — assiduously
By mony a lord an' lady;
'God save the King' 's a cuckoo sang
That 's unco easy said ay: — very

Wilson, who, there is good reason to believe, is *not* the 'Wee Johnnie' of a sarcastic epitaph which appears in the Kilmarnock edition, prospered, rose to be a magistrate, and realised a competency—a portion of which, originally intended for the building in his native town of 'a school in which poor children are to be taught reading, writing, and arithmetic only,' is now applied towards local bursaries for poor students. He died in Ayr on the 6th May 1821, and is buried in Kilmarnock. An obituary notice which appeared in the *Ayr Advertiser* four days after his death, states that 'throughout a life rather exceeding the ordinary lot of man, Mr Wilson was distinguished for unremitting attention to the discharge of a laborious duty, and for the strictest honesty and integrity both in principle and practice.'

* Thomas Warton was then poet-laureate. His ode for June 4, 1786, begins as follows:

'When Freedom nursed her native fire
In ancient Greece, and ruled the lyre,
Her bards, disdainful, from the tyrant's brow
The tinsel gifts of flattery tore,
But paid to guiltless power their willing vow,
And to the throne of virtuous kings,' &c.

The poets, too, a venal gang,
  Wi' rhymes weel-turn'd an' ready,
Wad gar you trow ye ne'er do wrang, make—believe
  But ay unerring steady,
    On sic a day.

For me! before a monarch's face,
  Ev'n there I winna flatter; won't
For neither pension, post, nor place,
  Am I your humble debtor:
So, nae reflection on your Grace,
  Your Kingship to bespatter;
There 's monie waur been o' the race, worse—royal family
  And aiblins ane been better perhaps
    Than you this day.

'Tis very true, my sovereign King,
  My skill may weel be doubted;
But facts are cheels that winna ding, fellows—will not be beaten
  An' downa be disputed: cannot
Your royal nest, beneath your wing,
  Is e'en right reft an' clouted, torn and patched
And now the third part o' the string,
  An' less, will gang about it go round
    Than did ae day.* at one time

Far be 't frae me that I aspire from
  To blame your legislation,
Or say, ye wisdom want, or fire,
  To rule this mighty nation:
But faith! I muckle doubt, my sire, greatly
  Ye 've trusted ministration
To chaps, wha, in a barn or byre men—cow-house
  Wad better fill'd their station,
    Than courts yon day.

And now ye 've gien auld Britain peace, given
  Her broken shins to plaister;

* The North American colonies had been lost.

Your sair taxation does her fleece, — sevère
Till she has scarce a tester: — sixpence
For me, thank God, my life 's a lease,
Nae bargain wearing faster,
Or faith! I fear, that, wi' the geese,
I shortly boost to pasture — must needs
I' the craft some day. — field near the house

I 'm no mistrusting Willie Pitt,
When taxes he enlarges,
(An' Will 's a true guid fallow's get,* — fellow—son
A name not envy spairges), — befouls
That he intends to pay your debt,
An' lessen a' your charges;
But, G— sake! let nae saving fit
Abridge your bonie barges †
An' boats this day.

Adieu, my Liege! may Freedom geck — exult
Beneath your high protection;
An' may ye rax Corruption's neck, — stretch
And gie her for dissection!
But since I 'm here, I 'll no neglect,
In loyal, true affection,
To pay your Queen, wi' due respect,
My fealty an' subjection
This great birth-day.

Hail, Majesty most Excellent!
While nobles strive to please ye,
Will ye accept a compliment,
A simple poet gies ye?
Thae bonie bairntime, Heav'n has lent, — family of children
Still higher may they heeze ye — raise

* 'A guid fallow's get' means 'a good fellow's son,' *get* being 'offspring,' 'that which is begotten,' as in 'She was nae get o' moorland tips,' in 'Mailie's Elegy.'

† On the supplies for the navy being voted, spring 1786, a Captain Macbride counselled some changes in that force, particularly the giving up of 64-gun ships, which occasioned a good deal of discussion.

I
Dow
I'
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An'
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To mak
So, ye may
For a' th
There, him
Few bette
And yet, wi'
He was an

For you, right
Nane sets the
Altho' a ribban a
Wad been a dr
As ye disown you
That bears the k
Then swith

Young, royal 'tarry-breeks,' I learn, sailor
Ye 've lately come athwart her;
A glorious galley,* stem and stern,
Weel rigg'd for Venus' barter;
But first hang out, that she 'll discern
Your hymeneal charter;
Then heave aboard your grapple-airn,
An', large upon her quarter,
Come full that day.

Ye, lastly, bonie blossoms a',
Ye royal lasses dainty,
Heav'n mak you guid as weel as braw, handsome
An' gie ye lads a-plenty!
But sneer na British boys awa! not—away
For kings are unco scant ay,
An' German gentles are but sma', princes—of small account
They 're better just than want ay
On onie day. any

God bless you a'! consider now,
Ye 're unco muckle dautet; made very much of
But ere the course o' life be through,
It may be bitter sautet: salted
An' I hae seen their coggie fou, dish full
That yet hae tarrow't at it;†
But or the day was done, I trow, before—believe
The laggen‡ they hae clautet scraped
Fu' clean that day.

Here may be introduced the greatest of all Burns's satires—'The Holy Fair.' An incomplete manuscript of this poem, now preserved in the Burns Monument Museum, Kilmarnock, is prefaced by the words 'Composed in Autumn, 1785.' It is, of course,

* Alluding to the newspaper account of a certain royal sailor's amour.—*B.* The allusion here is to Prince William Henry, third son of George III. (bred for the navy), afterwards William IV., and his marriage to Mrs Jordan, an actress.

† To *tarrow* at food is to linger over it from dislike at it or from want of appetite.

‡ The angle between the side and bottom of a wooden dish.

quite within the limits of possibility that the poem, as it no stands, was written in its entirety in the end of August or Se tember 1785, after the celebration of the Mauchline communio But Burns's dates are not always to be relied upon, as his 'Janua 1785' attached to a copy of the 'Epistle to Davie' striking shows. The length and finish of 'The Holy Fair' suggest t possibility, to say the least, of its having undergone an elabora revision in the early months of 1786.*

The transactions described in the piece are those which attend a rural celebration of the communion in Scotland till a compar tively recent period. But it is important to notice that the ri itself, and even the place where it was administered, form no pa of the picture. Burns limits himself to the assemblage, part composed of parishioners and partly of strangers, which was gather on such occasions, in some open space near the church, where a su cession of clergymen, usually from the neighbouring parishes, con ducted from a *tent* or movable pulpit a succession of services, whil a lesser body were attending the more solemn ritual within doors The particular scene referred to by the poet is the churchyard o Mauchline,† where the crowd sat upon tombstones, benches, and stools, or stretched themselves on the ground, and thus must have formed a picture of a very remarkable kind. That Burns's descrip tion is not exaggerated in any important particular, would appear by a passage from a pamphlet which was published in the year of the poet's birth, under the title of *A Letter from a Blacksmith to the Ministers and Elders of the Church of Scotland.*

* Full reproductions in print, *verbatim et literatim*, of the manuscripts in the Burns Monument Museum, with explanatory notes, are given in a volume entitled *Burns Holograph Manuscripts in the Kilmarnock Monument Museum*, compiled by Mr David Sneddon (Kilmarnock, D. Brown & Co., 1880).

† The communion was then administered at Mauchline on the second Sunday of August, and it seems to have been very attractive, for while in 1755 the whole population of the parish, according to an estimate made by the Rev. Dr Webster, of Edinburgh, was only 1169, the number of communicants stated in the session-books for the occasion of 1784 was 1350 - that for 1785 was 1212 - and that for 1786 'about fourteen hundred.' Each 'table,' as a rule, is said to have held about eighty persons. 'I may mention,' says Dr Edgar, in his *Lectures on Old Church Life in Scotland* (first series), 'that one of the old stories I have heard of the Mauchline communions is, that on one occasion a boy, whom I remember as an old man, was present at the sacrament, and heard the beadle call to the preacher in the tent, to "fire away, for the seventeenth table was filling, and there was no end to the work."' Further, 'It is difficult to see how the services at the Mauchline communions, in the latter days of Mr Auld's ministry, could have been concluded in less than nine hours, and, if table addresses were as prolix then as they were fifty years later, it may have taken an hour or two longer to get over the work.'

'In Scotland,' says this writer, 'they run from kirk to kirk, and flock to see a sacrament, and make the same use of it that the papists do of their pilgrimages and processions —that is, indulge themselves in drunkenness, folly, and idleness. Most of the servants, when they agree to serve their masters in the western parts of the kingdom, make a special provision that they shall have liberty to go to a certain number of fairs, or to an equal number of sacraments; and as they consider a sacrament, or an occasion (as they call the administration of the Lord's Supper), in a neighbouring parish in the same light in which they do at a fair, so they behave at it much in the same manner. I defy Italy, in spite of all its superstition, to produce a scene better fitted to raise pity and regret in a religious, humane, and understanding heart, or to afford an ampler field for ridicule to the careless and profane, than what they call a field-preaching upon one of those occasions. At the time of the administration of the Lord's Supper, upon the Thursday, Saturday, and Monday we have preaching in the fields near the church. At first, you find a great number of men and women lying together upon the grass; here they are sleeping and snoring, some with their faces towards heaven, others with their faces turned downwards, or covered with their bonnets; there you find a knot of young fellows and girls making assignations to go home together in the evening, or to meet in some ale-house; in another place you see a pious circle sitting round an ale-barrel, many of which stand ready upon carts for the refreshment of the saints. The heat of the summer season, the fatigue of travelling, and the greatness of the crowd, naturally dispose them to drink; which inclines some of them to sleep, works up the enthusiasm of others, and contributes not a little to produce those miraculous conversions that sometimes happen at these occasions; in a word, in this sacred assembly there is an odd mixture of religion, sleep, drinking, courtship, and a confusion of sexes, ages, and characters. When you get a little nearer the speaker, so as to be within the reach of the sound, though not of the sense of the words, for that can only reach a small circle, you will find some weeping and others laughing, some pressing to get nearer the tent or tub in which the parson is sweating, bawling, jumping, and beating the desk; others fainting with the stifling heat, or wrestling to extri-

cate themselves from the crowd: one seems very devout and serious, and the next moment is scolding and cursing his neighbour for squeezing or treading on him; in an instant after, his countenance is composed to the religious gloom, and he is groaning, sighing, and weeping for his sins: in a word, there is such an absurd mixture of the serious and comic, that were we convened for any other purpose than that of worshipping the God and Governor of Nature, the scene would exceed all *power of farce.*'

'The Holy Fair' almost literally reproduces this description. Fergusson's 'Leith Races' served Burns as a model. The Edinburgh poet is there conducted to the Races by an imaginary being, whom he names MIRTH, exactly as Burns is conducted to the Holy Fair by FUN.

THE HOLY FAIR.

A robe of seeming truth and trust
  Hid crafty observation;
And secret hung, with poison'd crust,
  The dirk of defamation:
A mask that like the gorget show'd,
  Dye-varying on the pigeon;
And for a mantle large and broad,
  He wrapt him in *Religion.*
*Hypocrisy à-la-Mode.**

Upon a simmer Sunday morn, — summer
  When Nature's face is fair,
I walkèd forth to view the corn,
  An' snuff the caller air. — fresh
The rising sun owre Galston muirs — over
  Wi' glorious light was glintin;
The hares were hirplin down the furrs, — creeping—furrows
  The lav'rocks they were chantin — larks
    Fu' sweet that day.

As lightsomely I glowr'd abroad, — with light heart—gazed
  To see a scene sae gay,
Three hizzies, early at the road, — wenches
  Cam skelpin up the way. — hurrying, walking smartly

* These lines, like most of the mottoes prefixed to Burns's poems, are probably his own.

Twa had manteeles o' dolefu' black, mantles
But ane wi' lyart lining; gray
The third, that gaed a-wee a-back, held a little aloof
Was in the fashion shining,
Fu' braw that day. very elegant

The *twa* appear'd like sisters twin,
In feature, form an' claes;
Their visage* wither'd, lang an' thin,
An' sour as ony slaes: sloes
The *third* cam up, hap-step-an'-lowp, hop-step-and-leap
As light as ony lambie,
An' wi' a curchie low did stoop, courtesy
As soon as e'er she saw me,
Fu' kind that day.

Wi' bonnet aff, quoth I, 'Sweet lass,
I think ye seem to ken me; know
I 'm sure I 've seen that bonie face,
But yet I canna name ye.' cannot
Quo' she, an' laughin as she spak,
An' taks me by the hands,
'Ye, for my sake, hae gien the feck bulk
Of a' the ten commands commandments
A screed some day. rent

'My name is Fun—your cronie dear,
The nearest friend ye hae;
An' this is Superstition here,
An' that 's Hypocrisy.
I 'm gaun to Mauchline "Holy fair," going
To spend an hour in daffin: sport
Gin ye 'll go there, yon runkl'd pair, If—wrinkled
We will get famous laughin
At them this day.'

Quoth I, 'With a' my heart, I 'll do 't;
I 'll get my Sunday's sark on, shirt

* Variation—'Faces.'

An' meet you on the holy spot;
Faith, we'se hae fine remarkin!' *
Then I gaed hame at crowdie-time,† went—breakfast-time
An' soon I made me ready;
For roads were clad, from side to side, filled
Wi' monie a wearie body, many
In droves that day.

Here farmers gash, in ridin graith, sensible—attire
Gaed hoddin by their cotters; jogging beside
There swankies young, in braw braid-claith, strapping fellows—
Are springin owre the gutters. fine broadcloth
The lasses, skelpin barefit, thrang, hastening barefooted—crowded together
In silks an' scarlets glitter;
Wi' sweet-milk cheese, in monie a whang, large piece
An' farls bak'd wi' butter, cakes
Fu' crump that day. hard and brittle

When by the 'plate' we set our nose, plate for the 'collection' or offertory
Weel heapèd up wi' ha'pence,
A greedy glowr 'black-bonnet' ‡ throws, stare
An' we maun draw our tippence. must bring out—twopence
Then in we go to see the show,
On ev'ry side they 're gathrin;
Some carryin dails, some chairs an' stools, deals
An' some are busy blethrin gossiping
Right loud that day.

Here stands a shed to fend the show'rs, ward off
An' screen our countra gentry;

* Variation—

'Quothie I 'll get my tither coat,
And on my Sunday's sark;
An' meet ye in the yard without
At op'ning o' the wark.'

It used to be a fashion in Scotland to don a finer shirt along with the 'best clothes' on Sunday.

† 'Crowdie,' strictly speaking, is meal and cold water mixed together so as to form a thick gruel.

‡ 'Black-bonnet,' a once popular nickname in Scotland for the elder stationed beside the plate at the church door for receiving the offerings of the congregation. Occasionally 'black-bonnet' was applied to the minister himself.

There 'Racer Jess,' * an twa-three w——s,
  Are blinkin at the entry.
Here sits a raw o' tittlin jads, giggling girls
  Wi' heavin breasts an' bare neck;
An' there a batch o' wabster lads, group—weaver
  Blackguarding frae Kilmarnock, Come bent on mischief
    For fun this day.

Here some are thinkin on their sins,
  An' some upo' their claes; upon—clothes
Ane curses feet that fyl'd his shins, one—defiled
  Anither sighs an' prays: another
On this hand sits a chosen swatch, † sample
  Wi' screw'd-up, grace-proud faces; ‡
On that a set o' chaps, at watch,
  Thrang winkin on the lasses busy
    To chairs that day.

O happy is that man, an' blest!
  Nae wonder that it pride him!
Whase ain dear lass, that he likes best, own
  Comes clinkin down beside him! sits down hastily
Wi' arm repos'd on the chair back,
  He sweetly does compose him;
Which, by degrees, slips round her neck,
  An 's loof upon her bosom, hand
    Unkend that day. unnoticed

Now a' the congregation o'er
  Is silent expectation;
For Moodie speels the holy door, climbs
  Wi' tidings o' dam—ation. §

* The half-witted daughter of Poosie Nansie, already mentioned. She died in 1813. Some MSS. read 'Bet B—r there.'

† 'Chosen swatch' may be rendered, 'a group of persons who believed themselves to be among the "elect" (chosen) for salvation.'

‡ Variation—'Wi' mercy-beggin faces.'

§ In the Kilmarnock edition, the word was 'salvation:' it was changed at the suggestion of Dr Hugh Blair of Edinburgh. The Rev. Alexander Moodie was minister of Riccarton, and one of the heroes of 'The Twa Herds.' He was a never-failing assistant at the Mauchline sacraments. In his addresses he dwelt chiefly on the terrors of the law. On one occasion he is credited with having told an audience that they would find the text in John,

Should *Hornie*, as in ancient days, Satan
'Mang sons o' God present him,
The vera sight o' Moodie's * face,
To 's ain het hame † had sent him hot
Wi' fright that day.

Hear how he clears the points o' Faith
Wi' rattlin an' thumpin!
Now meekly calm, now wild in wrath,
He 's stampin, an' he 's jumpin!
His lengthen'd chin, his turn'd-up snout,
His eldritch squeel an' gestures, unearthly squeal
O how they fire the heart devout,
Like cantharidian plaisters plasters of cantharides, used to produce blisters
On sic a day!

But hark! the tent has chang'd its voice;
There 's peace an' rest nae langer;
For a' the real judges rise,
They canna sit for anger.
Smith opens out ‡ his cauld harangues, §
On practice and on morals;
An' aff the godly pour in thrangs, crowds
To gie the jars an' barrels
A lift that day.

What signifies his barren shine, ‖
Of moral pow'rs an' reason? ¶
His English style, an' gesture fine,
Are a' clean out o' season.

viii. 44, but it was so applicable to their case that there was no need of his reading it to them. The verse begins: 'Ye are of your father the devil,' &c. Moodie came from the Second Charge of Culross to Riccarton in 1762, and died there in 1799, in his seventy-second year.

* Variation—'Sawnie's.' † Variation—'To hell wi' speed.'

‡ Variation—'Geordie begins.'

§ Rev. (afterwards Dr) George Smith, minister of Galston—whom the poet introduces in a different feeling, under the appellation of Irvine-side, in 'The Kirk's Alarm,' and who is also mentioned in 'The Twa Herds.' Burns meant on this occasion to compliment him on his rational mode of preaching, but his friends regarded the stanza as calculated to injure his popularity. Dr Smith ministered in Galston from 1778 till his death on 28th April 1823.

‖ See note * to 'The Ordination,' p. 303.

¶ Variation— 'It 's na nae gospel truth divine,
To cant o' sense an' reason.'

Like Socrates or Antonine, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus
Or some auld pagan heathen,
The *moral man* he does define,
But ne'er a word o' *faith* in
That 's right that day.

In guid time comes an antidote
Against sic poison'd nostrum;
For Peebles, frae the water-fit,*
Ascends the holy rostrum:
See, up he 's got the Word o' God,
An' meek an' mim has view'd it, primly
While 'Common-sense' has taen the road,
An' aff, an' up the Cowgate †
Fast, fast that day.

Wee Miller ‡ niest, the Guard relieves, next
An' Orthodoxy raibles, rattles out
Tho' in his heart he weel believes,
An' thinks it auld wives' fables:

* The Rev. (afterwards Dr) William Peebles, minister of Newton-upon-Ayr, often called from its geographical situation, the *Water-fit*. He was in great favour at Ayr among the evangelical party, though much inferior in ability to the moderate ministers of that ancient burgh. 'Robert Hamilton, a crack-pated pauper, who lived long in Ayr, and amused everybody by his droll sayings, one day thus addressed a citizen in the hearing of one of these heretical gentlemen: "I dreamt yesterday I was dead, and at the door o' heaven; and whan I knocked at the door, Peter said: 'Wha 's there?' 'It 's me, Mr Robert Hamilton.' 'Whare d'ye come frae?' 'Frae the toon o' Ayr.' 'Get awa wi' ye! Ye canna get in here. There has nane been admitted frae that toon this twa hunner year.' Whan I gang back, I 'll say I 'm come frae Prestwick or the Newton"—meaning, in the latter case, that he would have the benefit of the reputation of Mr Peebles's ministrations.' Ordained in 1778, Peebles became a D.D. in 1795, and died in 1825. He published in 1803 a poem, 'The Crisis; or the Progress of Revolutionary Principles,' and, later, a volume of odes and elegies, and another of sermons.

† The Cowgate is a lane running off the main street of Mauchline, exactly opposite the entrance to the churchyard. The sense of the passage might be supposed allegorical. But the story goes that Mr Mackenzie, the surgeon of the village, and a friend of Burns, had recently written on some controversial topic under the title of *Common Sense*. On the particular day which Burns is supposed to have had in view, Mackenzie had arranged to join Sir John Whitefoord of Ballochmyle, go to Dumfries House, in Auchinleck parish, and dine with the Earl of Dumfries. Mackenzie, after attending church, and listening to some of the outdoor harangues, was seen to leave the assembly, and go off along the Cowgate, on his way to Ballochmyle, just as Peebles ascended the rostrum.

‡ The Rev. Alexander Miller, afterwards minister of Kilmaurs. He was of remarkably low stature, but enormously stout. Burns believed him at the time to belong to the moderate party. This stanza, virtually the most depreciatory in the whole poem, is said to have retarded Miller's advancement. He was ordained at Kilmaurs in 1788, and died in 1804.

But faith! the birkie wants a manse, — fellow
So, cannilie he hums them;*
Altho' his carnal wit an' sense
Like hafflins-wise o'ercomes him — partly
At times that day.

Now, butt an' ben, the change-house fills,† — public-house
Wi' yill-caup commentators; — ale-cup
Here 's crying out for bakes an' gills, — biscuits
An' there the pint-stowp clatters; — pint-measure
While thick an' thrang, an' loud an' lang, — crowded
Wi' Logic an' wi' Scripture,
They raise a din, that, in the end,
Is like to breed a rupture
O' wrath that day.

Leeze me on drink! it gies us mair — Commend me to
Than either school or college;
It kindles wit, it waukens lear, — rouses—learning
It pangs us fou o' knowledge. — crams—full
Be 't whisky-gill or penny-wheep, — very small beer
Or ony stronger potion,
It never fails, on drinkin deep,
To kittle up our notion, — enliven our wits
By night or day.

The lads an' lasses, blythely bent
To mind baith saul an' body, — both—soul
Sit round the table, weel content,
An' steer about the toddy. — stir
On this ane's dress, an' that ane's leuk, — look
They 're making observations;
While some are cozie i' the neuk, — corner
An' forming assignations
To meet some day.

* 'Cannilie hums them' may mean 'gently mumbles them'—*i.e.*, the 'auld wives' fables.' Or, if Burns used the word 'hum' in the English slang sense, 'Cannilie hums them' may mean 'dexterously humbugs' the champions of evangelicalism.

† 'But-and-ben' means kitchen and parlour. Here Burns means to say that the whole of the public-house was filled.

But now the L—'s ain trumpet touts, sounds
Till a' the hills are rairin, roaring with the echo
And echoes back-return the shouts;
Black Russell* is† na spairin: sparing
His piercing words, like Highlan swords,
Divide the joints an' marrow;‡
His talk o' H—ll, whare devils dwell,
Our vera 'sauls does harrow'§
Wi' fright that day.

A vast, unbottom'd, boundless pit,
Fill'd fou o' lowin brunstane, flaming brimstone
Whase ragin flame, an' scorchin heat,
Wad melt the hardest whun-stane! whinstone
The half-asleep start up wi' fear,
An' think they hear it roarin,
When presently it does appear,
'Twas but some neebor snorin
Asleep that day.

'Twad be owre lang a tale, to tell too long
How monie stories past,
An' how they crouded to the yill, ale
When they were a' dismist:
How drink gaed round, in cogs an' caups, wooden dishes of different kinds
Amang the furms an' benches;
An' cheese an' bread, frae women's laps,
Was dealt about in lunches, large pieces
An' dawds that day. lumps

In comes a gawsie, gash Guidwife, buxom—sagacious
An' sits down by the fire,

* The Rev. John Russell, at this time minister of the Chapel-of-Ease, Kilmarnock, afterwards minister of Stirling, one of the heroes of 'The Twa Herds.' One of his contemporaries thus described him: 'He was the most tremendous man I ever saw: Black Hugh Macpherson was a beauty in comparison. His voice was like thunder, and his sentiments were such as must have shocked any class of hearers in the least more refined than those whom he usually addressed.' He was ordained in 1774, inducted minister of the West Church, Stirling, in 1800, and died on 28th February 1817.

† Variation—'Black Jock, he is.'

‡ See Hebrews, iv. 12.

§ Shakespeare's 'Hamlet' [Act I., sc. v.].—*B.*

Syne draws her kebbuck an' her knife, Then—cheese
The lasses they are shyer.
The auld Guidmen, about the *grace*,
Frae side to side they bother,
Till some ane by his bonnet lays,
An' gi'es them 't like a tether, gives it out as if it were a rope
Fu' lang that day.

Waesucks! for him that gets nae lass, Alas!
Or lasses that hae naething!
Sma' need has he to say a grace,
Or melvie his braw claithing! soil with meal—fine clothes
O Wives be mindfu', ance yoursel
How bonie lads ye wanted,
An' dinna, for a kebbuck-heel, end of a cheese
Let lasses be affronted
On sic a day!

Now 'Clinkumbell,' wi' rattlin tow, rope
Begins to jow* an' croon; peal—moan
Some swagger hame the best they dow, can
Some wait the afternoon.
At slaps the billies halt a blink, gaps in fences or walls—young men—a short time
Till lasses strip their shoon: take off—shoes
Wi' faith an' hope, an' love an' drink,
They 're a' in famous tune
For crack that day. talk

How monie hearts this day converts
O' Sinners and o' Lassies!
Their hearts o' stane, gin night, are gane before
As saft as ony flesh is.
There 's some are fou o' love divine;
There 's some are fou o' brandy;
An' monie jobs that day begin,
May end in Houghmagandie fornication
Some ither day.

* Variation— 'Then Robin Gib, wi' weary jow,
Begins to clink and croon.'
'Jow' includes both the swinging motion and pealing sound of a large bell.

In Burns's time, this poem was much relished by the moderate clergy, Dr Blair declaring it to be the most masterly satire of its kind in existence. It was generally believed in Ayrshire, moreover, that the publication of 'The Holy Fair' was attended with a good result, for after its appearance, the custom of resorting to the 'occasion' in neighbouring parishes for the sake of holiday-making fell into desuetude.

During the later part of June and the whole of July, the poems were passing through the press at Kilmarnock. While launching so many shafts at the evangelical clergy, Burns was brought into curious personal relations with one of them. Since, through the action of Jean Armour's father, Burns and she were not regarded as man and wife, it became necessary that they should submit to the censures of the Church in consequence of their irregular connection. Accordingly, Burns had now to make a series of public appearances before the Mauchline congregation—the last of them on the 6th of August, when a rebuke was administered. Mr Auld, who may not have heard of the 'unlucky paper,' acted gently with his satirist, and indulged him with permission to stand in his own seat, instead of the common 'place of repentance.'*

* 'Burns's remarks about his affair with the session in 1786 are not free from inaccuracy. In a letter dated 17th July of that year, he says that "Jean and her friends insisted much that she should stand along with me in the kirk, but the minister would not allow it, which bred a great deal of trouble, I assure you, and I am blamed as the cause of it, though I am sure I am innocent, but I am very much pleased, for all that, not to have had her company." Burns and Jean had each to stand three times before the congregation, and it is certain that on the last of these occasions, whatever may have been the case on the other two occasions, they stood together; not, of course, in the same seat, but at the same time. The minute of session runs thus: "August 6th, 1786.—Robert Burns, John Smith, Mary Lindsay, Jean Armour, and Agnes Auld appeared before the Congregation professing their repentance for the sin of fornication, and they having each appeared two several Sabbaths formerly, were this day rebuked and absolved from the scandal." The rebuke is extant, written out by Mr Auld, along with other admonitions addressed to other offenders during his ministry. I have been favoured with a copy of it for publication by the possessor, the Rev. John W. Ritchie, Langside, great-grandnephew of Mr Auld, and the following is its tenor:

"*July 30th*, 1786. "SMITH.

"RT. BURNS. "JEAN ARMOUR.

"You appear there to be rebuked, and at the same time making profession of repentance for ye sin of fornication.

"The frequency of this sin is just matter of lamentation among Christians, and affords just ground of deep humiliation to the guilty persons themselves.

"We call you to reflect seriously in contrition of heart on all the instances of your sin and guilt, in their numbers, high aggravation, and unhappy consequences, and say, having done foolishly, will do so no more.

"Beware of returning again to your sin, as some of you have done, like the dog to his vomit, or like the sow yt is washed to her wallowing in the mire."'—EDGAR'S *Old Church Life in Scotland*, vol. ii.

TO MR JOHN RICHMOND, EDINBURGH.

MOSSGIEL, 9th *July* 1786.

MY DEAR FRIEND—With the sincerest grief I read your letter. You are truly a son of misfortune. I shall be extremely anxious to hear from you how your health goes on; if it is any way re-establishing, or if Leith promises well: in short, how you feel in the inner man. . . .

I have waited on Armour since her return home; not from the least view of reconciliation, but merely to ask for her health, and to you I will confess it, from a foolish hankering fondness, very ill placed indeed. The mother forbade me the house, nor did Jean show that penitence that might have been expected. However the priest, I am informed, will give me a certificate as a single man, if I comply with the rules of the church, which for that very reason I intend to do.

I am going to put on sackcloth and ashes this day. I am indulged so far as to appear in my own seat. *Peccavi, pater, miserere mei.* My book will be ready in a fortnight. If you have any subscribers, return them by Connel. The Lord stand with the righteous; amen, amen.

R. B.

TO MR DAVID BRICE, GLASGOW.

MOSSGIEL, 17*th July* 1786.

I have been so throng [busy] printing my Poems, that I could scarcely find as much time as to write to you. Poor Armour is come back again to Mauchline, and I went to call for her, and her mother forbade me the house, nor did she herself express much sorrow for what she has done. I have already appeared publicly in church, and was indulged in the liberty of standing in my own seat. I do this to get a certificate as a bachelor, which Mr Auld has promised me. I am now fixed to go for the West Indies in October. Jean and her friends insisted much that she should stand along with me in the kirk, but the minister would not allow it, which bred a great trouble I assure you, and I am blamed as the cause of it, though I am sure I am innocent; but I am very much pleased, for all that, not to have had her company. I have no news to tell you that I remember. I am really happy to hear of your welfare, and that you are so well in Glasgow. I must certainly see you before I leave the country. I shall expect to hear from you soon, and am, dear Brice, yours,

ROBT. BURNS.

During this period, too, his pen was still very busy. He composed a playful ode

ON A SCOTCH BARD,

GONE TO THE WEST INDIES.

A' ye wha live by sowps o' drink, — spoonfuls
A' ye wha live by crambo-clink, — rhyming
A' ye wha live and never think,
Come mourn wi' me!
Our billie's gien us a' a jink,*
An' owre the Sea.

Lament him a' ye rantin core, — merry crew
Wha dearly like a random-splore, — frolic
Nae mair he'll join the merry roar,
In social key;
For now he's taen anither shore, — gone to another country
An' owre the Sea! — over

The bonie lasses weel may wiss him, — wish him well
And in their dear petitions place him:
The widows, wives, an' a' may bless him
Wi' tearfu' e'e; — eye
For weel I wat they'll sairly miss him — well I know—sadly
That's owre the Sea!

O Fortune, they hae room to grumble!
Hadst thou taen aff some drowsy bummle, — blunderer
Wha can do nought but fyke an' fumble,
'Twad been nae plea;
But he was gleg as onie wumble, — sharp—joiner's gimlet
That's owre the Sea!

Auld, cantie Kyle may weepers† wear,
An' stain them wi' the saut, saut tear: — salt
'Twill mak her poor auld heart, I fear, — make
In flinders flee: — splinters
He was her Laureat monie a year,
That's owre the Sea!

* Our brother has eluded us all. Variation—'Our billie, Rob, has taen a jink.'
† Strips of white muslin placed on a cuff or sleeve as a token of mourning.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] ... lalty chiel, — good-humoured fellow
[illegible] — full
He [illegible] the vera Deil, — would not have wronged the very devil
Tho' [illegible] owre the Sea.

Farewell, my rhyme-composing billie! — comrade
Your [illegible] was right ill-willie; — full of ill-will, unfriendly
But may ye flourish like a lily,
Now bonnilie!
I'll toast ye in my hindmost gillie, — last gill (of whisky)
Tho' owre the Sea!

In a different spirit, he wrote an epitaph for himself—at once a self revelation and a confession so solemn and so complete as to have anticipated, and taken the sting from, all subsequent comment on the subject:

A BARD'S EPITAPH.*

Is there a whim-inspirèd fool,
Owre fast for thought, owre hot for rule, too
Owre blate to seek, owre proud to snool, bashful—submit tamely
Let him draw near;
And owre this grassy heap sing dool, over—lament
And drap a tear.

Is there a Bard of rustic song,
Who, noteless, steals the crowds among,
That weekly this area throng,
O, pass not by!
But, with a frater-feeling strong,
Here heave a sigh.

Is there a man whose judgment clear
Can others teach the course to steer,
Yet runs, himself, life's mad career,
Wild as the wave;
Here pause—and, through the starting tear,
Survey this grave.

The poor Inhabitant below
Was quick to learn and wise to know,
And keenly felt the friendly glow,
And softer flame;
But thoughtless follies laid him low,
And stain'd his name!

Reader, attend—whether thy soul
Soars fancy's flights beyond the pole,
Or darkling grubs this earthly hole,
In low pursuit;
Know, prudent, cautious self-controul
Is Wisdom's root.

Friendship also had its demands upon him. He wrote a Dedi-

* It has been conjectured that this poem was written to supersede the 'Elegy on the Death of Robert Ruisseaux,' which appeared (see page 136) in the Common-place Book, and that he (Burns) originally intended that elegy to have a place in the Kilmarnock edition.

cation of his Poems to Gavin Hamilton, taking the opportunity not merely to sketch his friend's character, but to fire a parting shot at 'Orthodoxy' and its adherents. For some reason, it did not appear in front of the volume—the place which has come to be regarded as the monopoly of the Dedication. It is given at page 185.

A DEDICATION TO GAVIN HAMILTON, Esq.

Expect na, Sir, in this narration,
A fleechin, fleth'rin Dedication, — begging—flattering
To roose you up, an' ca' you guid, — praise
An' sprung o' great an' noble bluid;
Because ye're sirnam'd like *His Grace*,*
Perhaps related to the race:
Then when I 'm tired—and sae are ye,
Wi' monie a fulsome, sinfu' lie,
Set up a face, how I stop short, — pretence
For fear your modesty be hurt.

This may do—maun do, Sir, wi' them wha
Maun please the Great-Folk for a wamefou; — bellyful
For me! sae laigh I need na bow, — low
For, Lord be thankit, I can plough;
And when I downa yoke a naig, — cannot—horse
Then, Lord be thankit, I can beg;
Sae I shall say, an' that 's nae flatt'rin,
It 's just *sic Poet* an' *sic Patron*. — like poet, like patron

The Poet, some guid Angel help him,
Or else, I fear, some ill ane skelp him! — beat
He may do weel for a' he 's done yet,
But only—he 's no just begun yet.

The Patron (Sir, ye maun forgie me, — forgive
I winna lie, come what will o' me),
On ev'ry hand it will allow'd be,
He 's just—nae better than he should be.

* The Duke of Hamilton.

I readily and freely grant,
He downa see a poor man want; cannot bear to
What 's no his ain, he winna tak it; not—own—won't
What ance he says, he winna break it;*
Ought he can lend he 'll no refus 't, Aught
Till aft his guidness is abus'd;
And rascals whyles that do him wrang, sometimes—wrong
Ev'n *that*, he does na mind it lang:
As Master, Landlord, Husband, Father,
He does na fail his part in either.

But then, nae thanks to him for a' that;
Nae godly symptom ye can ca' that;
It 's naething but a milder feature,
Of our poor, sinfu', corrupt Nature:
Ye 'll get the best o' moral works,
'Mang black Gentoos † and pagan Turks, Hindus
Or hunters wild on Ponotaxi,‡
Wha never heard of Orthodoxy.
That he 's the poor man's friend in need,
The Gentleman in word and deed,
It 's no thro' terror of D——tion;
It 's just a carnal inclination. §

Morality, thou deadly bane,
Thy tens o' thousands thou hast slain!
Vain is his hope, whose stay an' trust is
In moral Mercy, Truth, and Justice! ‖

No—stretch a point to catch a plack; farthing
Abuse a brother to his back;
Steal thro' the winnock frae a w——, window
But point the Rake that taks the door;

* Once he has given his word, he will stand by it.

† Burns here uses the popular rendering of the Portuguese *Gentio*, Gentile, applied by old English writers to the natives of India.

‡ 'Ponotaxi' would appear to be a mistake for Cotopaxi.

§ In the first edition there was an additional line here—

'And Och! that 's nae regeneration!'

‖ The sarcasm of this caricature of moderatism with its 'cold morality,' from the high evangelical point of view, has not been perceived by some of Burns's critics. Thus, M. Taine, who doubts whether any one has 'better spoken the language of rebels and levellers than Burns, finds in these four lines 'hatred to cant and return to nature.'

[illegible] any whose w
[illegible] keep [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]

[illegible] pa
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]

[illegible] muddy pooled
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible] brist
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]

[illegible] almost forgot
[illegible]

foolish impulse

[illegible] take

[illegible] almos

For prayin I hae little skill o't,
I 'm baith dead-sweer, an' wretched ill o't; altogether unwilling —clumsy at it
But I 'se repeat each poor man's pray'r, I 'll
That kens or hears about you, Sir— knows

'May ne'er Misfortune's gowling bark, angry
Howl thro' the dwelling o' the Clerk!
May ne'er his gen'rous, honest heart,
For that same gen'rous spirit smart!
May Kennedy's far-honor'd name *
Lang beet his hymeneal flame, fan
Till Hamiltons, at least a diz'n, dozen
Are frae their nuptial labors risen:
Five bonie lasses round their table,
And sev'n braw fellows, stout an' able, fine
To serve their King an' Country weel, well
By word, or pen, or pointed steel!
May Health and Peace, with mutual rays,
Shine on the ev'ning o' his days;
Till his wee, curlie John's ier-oe,†
When ebbing life nae mair shall flow, more
The last, sad, mournful rites bestow!'

I will not wind a lang conclusion,
With complimentary effusion:
But whilst your wishes and endeavours
Are blest with Fortune's smiles and favours,
I am, Dear Sir, with zeal most fervent,
Your much indebted, humble servant.

But if (which Pow'rs above prevent)
That iron-hearted carl, Want, fellow
Attended, in his grim advances,
By sad mistakes, and black mischances, misfortunes
While hopes, and joys, and pleasures fly him,
Make you as poor a dog as I am,
Your 'humble servant' then no more;
For who would humbly serve the Poor?

* Mrs Hamilton was a Kennedy.
† Great-grandchild: literally, a grandchild's heir, from *oe*, a grandchild, and *eer*, an heir.

But, by a poor man's hopes in Heav'n!
While recollection's pow'r is giv'n,
If, in the vale of humble life,
The victim sad of Fortune's strife,
I, thro' the tender-gushing tear,
Should recognise my Master dear,
If friendless, low, we meet together,
Then, sir, your hand,—my Friend and Brother!

Amongst other productions appropriate to this period, was

THE FAREWELL.
TO THE BRETHREN OF ST JAMES'S LODGE, TARBOLTON.

TUNE—*Good-night and joy be wi' you a'.*

Adieu! a heart-warm, fond adieu!
Dear brothers of the *mystic tie!*
Ye favour'd, ye *enlighten'd* few,
Companions of my social joy!
Tho' I to foreign lands must hie,
Pursuing Fortune's slidd'ry ba', slippery ball
With melting heart, and brimful eye,
I'll mind you still, tho' far awa.

Oft have I met your social Band,
And spent the chearful, festive night;
Oft, honor'd with supreme command,
Presided o'er the *Sons of light:*
And by that *Hieroglyphic* bright,
Which none but *Craftsmen* ever saw!
Strong Mem'ry on my heart shall write
Those happy scenes when far awa!

May Freedom, Harmony and Love,
Unite you in the *grand Design,*
Beneath th' Omniscient Eye above,
The glorious *Architect* Divine!
That you may keep th' *unerring line,*
Still rising by the *plummet's law,*

Till *Order* bright completely shine,
Shall be my pray'r when far awa.

And *You*,* farewell! whose merits claim
Justly that *highest badge* to wear!
Heav'n bless your honor'd, noble Name,
To *Masonry* and *Scotia* dear!
A last request permit me here,
When yearly ye assemble a',
One *round*, I ask it with a *tear*,
To him, *the Bard, that 's far awa.*

It has been mentioned that Burns was nominated as Depute Master in July 1784. In the record of the lodge, he appears as re-elected in July 1785, and in this capacity he signs minutes on 29th June, 20th July, 2d and 18th August, 15th September, 26th October, 10th November, 1st and 7th December, 7th January 1786, and 1st March, when his brother Gilbert is entered 'passed and raised.' Apparently during all this time, though living several miles from the village, he had never missed attendance on one of the meetings of the lodge. On several occasions he held subordinate lodges at Mauchline, thus doing the utmost he could to propagate the masonic faith. One of these meetings took place on the 25th May, eleven days subsequent to the assumed date of the parting with Mary Campbell. From the 1st of March, about which time the affair which evoked the 'Lament' began to harass him, his attendance on the Tarbolton lodge was irregular. His signature appears, however, at the minutes of 7th and 15th June. On the latter occasion there is a curious entry: 'It was proposed by the lodge, that as they much wanted a lodge-room, a proposal be laid before the heritors, who are intending to build a steeple here, that the lodge shall contribute to the building of a *lodge-room as the basis of that steeple*, and that from the funds of the

* The masonic official alluded to here was at one time believed to have been Major-general (then Captain) James Montgomerie (a younger brother of Colonel Hugh Montgomerie of Coilsfield), who was Grand Master of the lodge, while the poet was Depute Master. The Rev. J. C. Higgins of Tarbolton states positively, however, in his *Life of Robert Burns* (Appendix C) that the person alluded to was William Wallace, sheriff of Ayrshire, and Grand Master of St David's Lodge. The same view is taken by James Marshall, the author of 'A Winter with Robert Burns,' and is supported by the fact that the Sheriff's name is 'to Scotia dear.' A third suggestion, that Sir John Whitefoord is referred to, may be dismissed.

lodge they offer fifteen pounds, besides what will be advanced from the particular friends of the lodge; in order that this proposal be properly laid before the heritors, five persons—namely, the Right Worshipful Master, Brother M'Math, *Brother Burns*, Brother Wodrow, Brother William Andrew—are appointed to meet on Saturday at one o'clock, to draw up a proposal to lay before the heritors on Friday first.'

The St James's Lodge at this time met in a back-room of one of the inns in the village—a small house of entertainment kept by a person of the name of Manson. On the approach of St John's Day, the 24th of June, when a procession of the Lodge was contemplated, Burns sent these lines to his friend Mackenzie:

Friday first 's the day appointed
By the Right Worshipful anointed,
To hold our grand procession;
To get a blad o' Johnie's morals,*
And taste a swatch o' Manson's barrels — sample
I' the way of our profession.
The Master and the Brotherhood
Would a' be glad to see you;
For me I would be mair than proud
To share the mercies† wi' you.
If Death, then, wi' skaith, then, — hurt
Some mortal heart is hechtin, — threatening
Inform him, and storm him, — tell him peremptorily
That Saturday you 'll fecht him. — fight

ROBERT BURNS.

MOSSGIEL, *An. M.* 5790 [A.D. 1786].

The poet's signature also appears at the minutes of 29th June,

* 'Blad' means a blow or shower. Burns probably meant that Mackenzie would take advantage of the meeting of his friends to pelt them with his doctrines on morals. 'The phrase, "Johnie's morals,"' explains Mr Mackenzie in a letter to Dr Robert Chambers, in which he enclosed a copy of these verses, 'originated from some correspondence Burns and I had on the origin of morals; and "Manson's barrels" to the small beer of a very superior kind that the brethren got from him at dinner. The lines, "If Death, then, wi' skaith, then," &c. were in consequence of my expressing a doubt whether I could attend the lodge on that day, from the number of patients that I had to visit at that period.'

† 'These thy mercies,' *i. e.*, 'the food and drink now before us which Thou in Thine Infinite Benevolence hast vouchsafed,' was an expression frequently used in a Scottish grace before meat

18th August, 5th October, and 10th November.* It may be mentioned in this connection, that Burns joined at least once in the festivities of the Kilmarnock Lodge, presided over by his friend Major William Parker,† on which occasion he produced an appropriate song:

YE SONS OF OLD KILLIE.

TUNE—*Shawn-boy*, or *Over the water to Charlie.*

Ye sons of old Killie, assembled by Willie,
To follow the noble vocation;
Your thrifty old mother has scarce such another
To sit in that honourèd station.
I 've little to say, but only to pray,
As praying 's the ton of your fashion;
A prayer from the Muse you well may excuse,
'Tis seldom her favourite passion.

Ye powers who preside o'er the wind and the tide,
Who markèd each element's border;
Who formèd this frame with beneficent aim,
Whose sovereign statute is order:—
Within this dear mansion, may wayward Contention
Or witherèd Envy ne'er enter;
May secrecy round be the mystical bound,
And brotherly Love be the centre!

The estate of Ballochmyle, on the Ayr, near Mauchline, had recently passed from the Whitefoords to Claud Alexander, the son of a landed proprietor in the west of Scotland, who had realised a large fortune as paymaster-general of the East India

* Tradition has it that on the last of these occasions Burns bade farewell to the Lodge, in anticipation of his journey to Edinburgh. The book of the Lodge contains no notice of the circumstance; but John Lees, one of the brethren present, used to tell that 'Burns came in a pair of buckskins, out of which he would always pull the other shilling for the other bowl, till it was five in the morning. "An awful night *that!*"'

† This is understood to have been on the occasion of his admission as an honorary member of the Kilwinning St John's Lodge, No. 22, Kilmarnock, on 26th October 1786. Major Parker, who succeeded in 1802 to the estate of Assloss, about two miles out of Kilmarnock, on the road to Fenwick, was at this time Right Worshipful Master of that Lodge. The meeting-place of the lodge was the old Commercial Inn in Croft Street, demolished some years ago.

[illegible] Ayr in August. He had [illegible] the [illegible] of the [illegible] of great natural [illegible] [illegible] the heart of the poet. The evening is [illegible] The [illegible] the [illegible] of the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] upon a stranger, having the appearance [illegible] [illegible] was looking [illegible] against a tree [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the grounds being [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the evening being [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] was startled, but [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] When Burns wrote to Miss [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] afterwards he gave his own account of the [illegible] 'I was [illegible] he says, 'as chance directed [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] of my Muse, the banks of the Ayr, a very [illegible] [illegible] the paleness of the vernal year. The evening sun [illegible] [illegible] the distant western hills: not a breath stirred the [illegible] opening blossom, or the verdant spreading [illegible] It was a glorious moment for a poetic heart. I listened to the [illegible] warblers, pouring their harmony on every hand with a [illegible] kindred regard, and frequently turned out of my path lest I should disturb their little songs, or frighten them to [illegible] [illegible] "Surely," said I to myself, "he must be a wretch indeed who, regardless of your harmonious endeavour to please him, [illegible] [illegible] flights to discover your secret recesses, and rifle you of all the property nature gives you, your dearest comforts, your helpless nestlings." Even the hoary hawthorn twig that shot across the way, what heart at such a time but must have been interested in its welfare, and wished it to be preserved from the nibbling browsing cattle, or the withering eastern blast! Such was the scene,—and such the hour, when, in a corner of my prospect, I spied one of the fairest pieces of nature's workmanship that ever crowned a poetic landscape, those visionary bards excepted, who hold commerce with aërial beings! Had Calumny and Villainy taken my walk, they had at that moment sworn eternal peace with such an object. What an hour of inspiration for a poet! It would have raised plain, dull, historic prose to metaphor and measure.' *

He added that during his walk homeward he had composed a

* See *infra* Letter.

song (which he enclosed) descriptive of the scene and the meeting:

THE LASS O' BALLOCHMYLE.

TUNE—*Ettrick Banks.*

'Twas even—the dewy fields were green,
On every blade the pearls hang;*
The Zephyr wantoned round the bean,
And bore its fragrant sweets alang:
In every glen the mavis sang, thrush
All nature listening seemed the while,
Except where green-wood echoes rang,
Amang the braes o' Ballochmyle.

With careless step I onward strayed,
My heart rejoiced in nature's joy,
When musing in a lonely glade,
A maiden fair I chanced to spy:
Her look was like the morning's eye,
Her air like nature's vernal smile,
Perfection whispered, passing by,
'Behold the lass o' Ballochmyle!' †

Fair is the morn in flowery May,
And sweet is night in Autumn mild;
When roving thro' the garden gay,
Or wandering in the lonely wild:
But woman, nature's darling child!
There all her charms she does compile;
Even there her other works are foil'd
By the bonny lass o' Ballochmyle.

O had she been a country maid,
And I the happy country swain,
Tho' sheltered in the lowest shed
That ever rose on Scotland's plain!

* *Hang*, Scotticism for *hung*.

† Variation— 'The lily's hue and rose's dye,
Bespoke the lass o' Ballochmyle.

of Mossgiel. And particularly, without prejudice of the foresaid generality, the profits that may arise from the publication of my Poems presently in the Press—And also, I hereby dispone and convey to him in trust for behoof of my said natural daughter, the Copy right of said Poems in so far as I can dispose of the same by law, after she arrives at the above age of fifteen years complete—Surrogating and substituting the said Gilbert Burns, my brother, and his foresaids, in my full right, title, room, and place, of the whole premises, with power to him to intromit with and dispose [*sic*] upon the same at pleasure, and in general to do every other thing in the Premises that I could have done myself—before granting hereof, but always with and under the conditions before expressed —And I oblidge myself to warrand this disposition and assignation from my own proper fact and deed allenarly [*i.e.*, alone]—Consenting to the Registration hereof in the Books of Council and Session, or any other Judge's Books competent, therein to remain for preservation and constitute. . . . [MS. defective.] . . . whereof I have . . . Procutars [Procurators], &c.—In witness whereof I have wrote and signed these presents, consisting of this and the preceeding [*sic*] page, on stamped paper, with my own hand, at Mossgiel, the twenty second day of July one thousand seven hundred and eighty six years. ROBERT BURNS.

Two days later, legal intimation of the assignment was made at the Mercat Cross of Ayr, by William Chalmers, notary public.

Meanwhile, it was being whispered about Mauchline that Jean's father was contemplating legal measures to obtain a guarantee from the poet for the support of his expected offspring. Hearing of this, and dreading that the ultimate issue of such procedure would be imprisonment, Burns left home. He had an aunt (on his mother's side) named Allan, living at Old Rome* Forest, near Kilmarnock, where he had no doubt spent many days during the printing of the earlier sheets of his book. To this place he

* 'Old Rome' is probably a corruption of 'Old Room,' one of the many terms used in Scotland to designate a small farm. On this subject, Mr D. M'Naught, Kilmaurs, has written as follows in an article on 'Burns Topography: Kilmarnock and its Vicinity,' in the *Burns Chronicle* for 1893: 'The mining village of "Aul' Room" stood, till recently, on the south bank of the Irvine, within a gunshot of Gatehead Station, on the Glasgow and South-Western Railway, but not a vestige of it now remains, save the old schoolhouse. This village could not have been in existence in Burns's day; it was the mushroom growth of the neighbouring Fairlie coal-fields, and with them rose and fell. There are, however, the remains of an old brewery of more ancient date. The truth appears to be that "Old Rome Forest' and "Fairlie," were in those days interchangeable designations for the same place. It has been placed beyond doubt that one James Allan was employed, in 1786, as joiner or carpenter on the estate of Fairlie, whose wife Jean Brown (or Broun) was a half-sister of Burns's mother. It will occur to the reader's mind that Burns's father was employed as gardener to the Laird of Fairlie during the first two years of his sojourn in Ayrshire. In the expunged stanza of "Poor Mailie's Elegy," also, reference is made to the famous breed of "Fairlie lambs." These facts, though perhaps trivial in themselves, suggest the probability of a closer connection between Old Rome and the family

conveyed a large chest, containing the articles required for his voyage and colonial outfit. Here also he now took up his abode, though not regularly, in order to be out of the way of legal diligence, and thus was within short distance of John Wilson's press at Kilmarnock. The following letters were written at this time:

TO MR JOHN RICHMOND, EDINBURGH.

OLD ROME FOREST, 30th *July* 1786.

MY DEAR RICHMOND—My hour is now come—you and I will never meet in Britain more. I have orders, within three weeks at farthest, to repair aboard the *Nancy*, Captain Smith, from Clyde to Jamaica,* and to call at Antigua. This, except to our friend Smith, whom God long preserve, is a secret about Mauchline. Would you believe it? Armour has got a warrant to throw me in jail till I find security for an enormous sum. This they keep an entire secret, but I got it by a channel they little dream of; and I am wandering from one friend's house to another, and, like a true son of the gospel, 'have no where to lay my head.' I know you will pour an execration on her head, but spare the poor, ill-advised girl, for my sake; though, may all the furies that rend the injured, enraged lover's bosom, await her mother until her latest hour! I write in a moment of rage, reflecting on my miserable situation—exiled, abandoned, forlorn. I can write no more—let me hear from you by the return of coach. I will write you ere I go.—I am, dear Sir, yours here and hereafter, R. B.

TO JOHN LOGAN, ESQ., OF LAIGHT.†

SIR—I gratefully thank you for your kind offices in promoting my

of Burns than appears upon the surface. When or how the connection originated, it would be renewed and strengthened during the brief stay of the Poet in Irvine, Fairlie being within easy walking distance of that ancient burgh. On no other grounds can we account for his choosing this retreat in the hour of his extremity. The humble roof that then sheltered him cannot now be identified, but it was doubtless within the demesne of the old mansion-house, whose quaint chimneys, visible from the railway, originated the local descriptive appellation of "Fivelum Fairlie." This James Allan had a son Alexander, who was bred a shoemaker, but adopted a seafaring life, and became the progenitor of the proprietors of the "Allan Line" of Atlantic steamers.'

* The following advertisement appeared in *The Glasgow Mercury*, July 6–13, 1786: 'For SAVANNAH-LA-MAR, JAMAICA, to call at ANTIGUA,—The brigantine *Nancy*, Andrew Smith, master, will be at Greenock ready to take in goods, 25th instant, and will be clear to sail by 10th August. For freight or passage, apply to James Brown, insurance-broker, Glasgow; or to the master at Greenock.—Glasgow, 12th July 1786.' The *Mercury* for July 27–August 3, 1786, contains the information: 'The brigantine *Nancy*, A. S., master, now lying at GREENOCK.'—Finally, the issue for September 7–14, contains, under the head of 'Sailings from Clyde': 'Sept. 5, *Nancy*, Smith, Jamaica, goods.' The *Nancy*, which was to have sailed on 10th August, did not sail for two days after 'the third of Libra.'

† John Logan, proprietor of Knockshinnoch, in the parish of New Cumnock, married Martha, daughter of Captain Macadam of Laight, on the banks of the Afton. After the death of his father-in-law, he resided at Laight. He subsequently figures in 'The Kirk's Alarm.' He died at Ayr in 1816.

subscription, and still more for your very friendly letter. The first was doing me a favor, but the last was doing me an honor. I am in such a bustle at present, preparing for my West-India voyage, as I expect a letter every day from the master of the vessel, to repair directly to Greenock; that I am under a necessity to return you the subscription bills, and trouble you with the quantum of copies till called for, or otherwise transmitted to the Gentlemen who have subscribed. Mr Bruce Campbell * is already supplied with two copies, and I here send you 20 copies more. If any of the Gentlemen are supplied from any other quarter, 'tis no matter; the copies can be returned.

If orders from Greenock do not hinder, I intend doing myself the honor of waiting on you, Wednesday the 16th Inst.

I am much hurt, Sir, that I must trouble you with the copies; but, circumstanced as I am, I know no other way your friends can be supplied. I have the honor to be, Sir, your much indebted humble Servant,

ROBERT BURNS.

KILMARNOCK, 10*th Aug.* 1786.

TO MONS. JAMES SMITH, MAUCHLINE.

MOSSGIEL, *Monday Morning* [14*th Aug.*] 1786.

MY DEAR SIR—I went to Dr Douglas yesterday fully resolved to take the opportunity of Capt. Smith; but I found the Doctor with a Mr and Mrs White, both Jamaicans, and they have deranged my plans altogether. They assure him that to send me from Savannah la Mar to Port Antonio will cost my master, Charles Douglas, upwards of fifty pounds; besides running the risk of throwing myself into a pleuritic fever in consequence of hard travelling in the sun. On these accounts, he refuses sending me with Smith, but a vessel sails from Greenock the first of Sept. right for the place of my destination. The Captain of her is an intimate friend of Mr Gavin Hamilton's, and as good a fellow as heart could wish: with him I am destined to go. Where I shall shelter, I know not, but I hope to weather the storm. Perish the drop of blood of mine that fears them! I know their worst, and am prepared to meet it.—

I'll laugh, an' sing, an' shake my leg,
As lang's I dow. am able

On Thursday morning, if you can muster as much self-denial as to be out of bed about seven o'clock, I shall see you as I ride through to Cumnock. After all, Heaven bless the sex! I feel there is still happiness for me among them.—

O woman, lovely woman! Heaven designed you
To temper man!—we had been brutes without you!

R. B.

* Burns here alludes, no doubt, to Bruce Campbell of Mayfield and Millriggs, in the parish of Galston, one of whose sons, Alexander, a captain in the 74th Regiment, and an especial favourite of the Duke of Wellington, died of wounds received at the battle of Assaye. Bruce Campbell died in 1813, at the age of seventy-nine.

TO MRS CAMPBELL, PENCLOE.

[New Cumnock, 19th July, 1786.]

[illegible] men in my life whom I more [illegible] seems industrious to disappoint [illegible] yesterday fully resolved to see you and [illegible] conjuncture of circumstances con- [illegible] opportunity of sending you a line, I [illegible] preserve the last mark of our friendship you [illegible] this side of the Atlantic.

[illegible] to the wishes of parting Friendship!

ROBERT BURNS.

[illegible] extraordinary conjunction of circumstances—the [illegible] would have made his wife pursuing him at law, [illegible] the money received for his Poems; himself [illegible] preserve his liberty, that he might be enabled to [illegible] a miserable career in Jamaica—that Burns gave his [illegible] world. On the other hand, the merits of the [illegible] farmer of Mossgiel, and his generous social character, [illegible] of his frankly-confessed follies, secured for him the [illegible] friendship of many worthy people in Ayrshire. Hamilton of Mauchline, Aiken and Ballantine of Ayr, Muir and Parker of Kilmarnock, had all acted with loyal kindliness in obtaining patronage for the poet. The volume appeared on the last day of July, with the simple title, *Poems, chiefly in the Scottish dialect, by Robert Burns*, and the motto (his own composition):

> THE Simple Bard, unbroke by rules of Art,
> He pours the wild effusions of the heart:
> And if inspir'd, 'tis Nature's pow'rs inspire;
> Her's all the melting thrill, and her's the kindling fire.
>
> ANONYMOUS.

It contained the following pieces:—'The Twa Dogs,' 'Scotch Drink,' 'The Author's earnest cry and prayer,' 'The Holy Fair,' 'Address to the Deil,' 'The death and dying words of Poor Maillie,' 'Poor Maillie's Elegy,' 'To J. S**** [Smith],' 'A Dream,' 'The Vision,' 'Halloween,' 'The auld Farmer's new-year-morning Salutation to his auld Mare, Maggy,' 'The Cotter's Saturday night,'

* Husband of Anne Rankine, already mentioned, and an innkeeper at New Cumnock. Probably 'Mons. Thomas Campbell, Pencloe, was one of the numerous small proprietors of that name who resided in New and Old Cumnock.

'To a Mouse,' 'Epistle to Davie,' 'The Lament,' 'Despondency, an Ode,' 'Man was made to mourn,' 'Winter, a Dirge,' 'A Prayer in the prospect of Death,' 'To a Mountain-Daisy,' 'To Ruin,' 'Epistle to a young Friend,' 'On a Scotch Bard gone to the West Indies,' 'A Dedication to G**** H******* [Gavin Hamilton], Esq.,' 'To a Louse,' 'Epistle to J. L*****k [Lapraik], an old Scotch Bard,' 'To the same,' 'Epistle to W. S***** [Simson], Ochiltree,' 'Epistle to J. R****** [Rankine],' 'Song, It was upon a Lammas night,' 'Song, Now westlin winds,' 'Song, From thee, Eliza, I must go,' 'The Farewell [To the Brethren of St James's Lodge, Tarbolton],' 'Epitaphs and Epigrams,' 'A Bard's Epitaph.'

It was introduced by this preface:

The following trifles are not the production of the Poet, who, with all the advantages of learned art, and perhaps amid the elegances and idlenesses of upper life, looks down for a rural theme, with an eye to Theocrites or Virgil. To the Author of this, these and other celebrated names their countrymen are, in their original languages, 'A fountain shut up, and a book sealed.' Unacquainted with the necessary requisites for commencing Poet by rule, he sings the sentiments and manners, he felt and saw in himself and his rustic compeers around him, in his and their native language. Though a Rhymer from his earliest years, at least from the earliest impulses of the softer passions, it was not till very lately, that the applause, perhaps the partiality, of Friendship, wakened his vanity, so far as to make him think any thing of his was worth showing; and none of the following works were ever composed with a view to the press. To amuse himself with the little creations of his own fancy, amid the toil and fatigues of a laborious life; to transcribe the various feelings, the loves, the griefs, the hopes, the fears, in his own breast; to find some kind of counterpoise to the struggles of a world, always an alien scene, a task uncouth to the poetical mind; these were his motives for courting the Muses, and in these he found Poetry to be its own reward.

Now that he appears in the public character of an Author, he does it with fear and trembling. So dear is fame to the rhyming tribe, that even he, an obscure, nameless Bard, shrinks aghast, at the thought of being branded as 'An impertinent blockhead, obtruding his nonsense on the world; and because he can make a shift to jingle a few doggerel, Scotch rhymes together, looks upon himself as a Poet of no small consequence forsooth.'

It is an observation of that celebrated Poet,* whose divine Elegies do honor to our language, our nation, and our species, that 'Humility has depressed many a genius to a hermit, but never raised one to fame!' If

* Shenstone.

any Critic catches at the word *genius*, the Author tells him, once for all, that he certainly looks upon himself as possest of some poetic abilities, otherwise his publishing in the manner he has done, would be a manœuvre below the worst character, which, he hopes, his worst enemy will ever give him: but to the genius of a Ramsay, or the glorious dawnings of the poor, unfortunate Ferguson [*sic*], he, with equal unaffected sincerity, declares, that, even in his highest pulse of vanity, he has not the most distant pretensions. These two justly admired Scotch Poets he has often had in his eye in the following pieces; but rather with a view to kindle at their flame, than for servile imitation.

To his Subscribers, the Author returns his most sincere thanks. Not the mercenary bow over a counter, but the heart-throbbing gratitude of the Bard, conscious how much he is indebted to Benevolence and Friendship, for gratifying him, if he deserves it, in that dearest wish of every poetic bosom—to be distinguished. He begs his readers, particularly the Learned and the Polite, who may honor him with a perusal, that they will make every allowance for Education and Circumstances of Life: but, if after a fair, candid, and impartial criticism, he shall stand convicted of Dulness and Nonsense, let him be done by, as he would in that case do by others—let him be condemned, without mercy, to contempt and oblivion.

Burns plainly announces here the consciousness of possessing *some* ability. He told Dr Moore, a twelvemonth afterwards, that he was pretty confident when he published his poems that they would meet with a certain amount of applause. It was not long before that confidence was fully justified, so far as Ayrshire and the neighbouring districts were concerned. Robert Heron, the poet's earliest biographer, and then a young man of twenty-two, living in the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright, relates that by old and young the volume was everywhere received with delight and admiration. He himself got hold of it one Saturday night, and 'closed it not, till a late hour on the rising Sunday morn, after I had read over every syllable it contained.' 'Even plough boys and maid-servants would have gladly bestowed the wages which they earned the most hardly, and which they wanted to purchase necessary cloathing, if they might but procure the works of Burns.' The edition had consisted of 612 copies, for 350 of which subscribers had been obtained before publication. It appears that there had been an immediate sale beyond that list, for in little more than two months a reprint was under discussion, and the impression proposed was 1000. The speculation, when all

expenses were paid, left about twenty pounds in Burns's pocket.*

TO MR JOHN KENNEDY, DUMFRIES HOUSE.

KILMARNOCK, [*between 3d and 16th*] *August* 1786.

MY DEAR SIR—Your truly facetious epistle of the 3rd inst. gave me much entertainment. I was only sorry I had not the pleasure of seeing you as I passed your way, but we shall bring up all our leeway on Wednesday, the 16th current, when I hope to have it in my power to call on you and take a kind, very probably a last adieu, before I go for Jamaica; and I expect orders to repair to Greenock every day. I have at last made my public appearance, and am solemnly inaugurated into the numerous class. Could I have got a carrier, you should have had a score of vouchers for my Authorship; but now you have them, let them speak for themselves.

Farewell, dear Friend! may gude luck hit you,
And 'mang her favorites admit you!
If e'er Detraction shore to smit you, threaten—attack
May nane believe him!
And ony deil that thinks to get you,
Good Lord deceive him. R. B.

EXTEMPORE EPISTLE TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ.†

[STANZAS ON 'NAETHING.']

To you, Sir, this summons I 've sent,
Pray whip till the pownie is fraething; pony—frothing
But if you demand what I want,
I honestly answer you—naething.

* See Appendix, No. VII.

† This poem was given a place in the Glenriddel collection. Professor Jack of Glasgow University, in one of the very interesting papers which he contributed in 1878-79 to *Macmillan's Magazine* on 'Burns's Edinburgh Common-place Book,' in which the 'Stanzas' appear, ingeniously argues that they may have been written on February 24, 1788, the day after its author's return from Edinburgh to Mauchline, and to Jean (he supposes her to be the 'feminine whig') for whom—then *enceinte* for the second time—he took a room; on which day also he wrote to Mrs Maclehose contrasting her with the uneducated girl who had been so faithful to him. Professor Jack thinks Burns sent these verses to Gavin Hamilton before calling upon him. 'Kissed her and promised her—naething' undoubtedly expresses the feeling—happily but a temporary feeling—which Burns then had towards Jean. But the positive declaration, 'And now I must mount on the wave,' so different from the vague fear expressed in the letter to Clarinda, that the Indies must be his lot, appears to make it certain that the poem was written when he saw nothing for it but exile to Jamaica.

Ne'er scorn a poor Poet like me,
For idly just living and breathing,
While people of every degree
Are busy employed about—naething.

Poor Centum-per-centum may fast,
And grumble his hurdies their claithing;
He 'll find, when the balance is cast,
He 's gane to the devil for—naething.

The courtier cringes and bows,
Ambition has likewise its plaything;
A coronet beams on his brows:
And what is a coronet?—naething.

Some quarrel the Presbyter gown,
Some quarrel Episcopal graithing,*
But every good fellow will own
Their quarrel is all about—naething.

The lover may sparkle and glow,
Approaching his bonie bit gay thing:
But marriage will soon let him know
He 's gotten a buskit up naething.

The Poet may jingle and rhyme
In hopes of a laureate wreathing,
And when he has wasted his time
He 's kindly rewarded with naething.

The thundering bully may rage,
And swagger and swear like a heathen;
But collar him fast, I 'll engage,
You 'll find that his courage is naething.

Last night with a feminine whig,
A Poet she could na put faith in,
But soon we grew lovingly big,
I taught her, her terrors were naething.

posteriors—clothing

dispute about

dressed

* 'Graithing' literally means 'harness.' Here Burns uses it, not quite respectfully, to indicate vestments.

Her whigship was wonderful pleased,
But charmingly tickled wi' ae thing;
Her fingers I lovingly squeezed,
And kissed her and promised her—naething.

The priest anathèmas may threat,—
Predicament, Sir, that we 're baith in;*
But when honour's reveillé is beat,
The holy artillery 's naething.

And now, I must mount on the wave,
My voyage perhaps there is death in:
But what is a watery grave?
The drowning a Poet is naething.

And now, as grim death 's in my thought,
To you, Sir, I make this bequeathing:
My service as long as ye 've aught,
And my friendship, by G—, when ye 've naething.

THE FAREWELL.

The valiant, in himself, what can he suffer?
Or what does he regard his single woes?
But when, alas! he multiplies himself,
To dearer selves, to the lov'd tender fair,
To those whose bliss, whose beings hang upon him,
To helpless children,—then, Oh then he feels
The point of misery festering in his heart,
And weakly weeps his fortune like a coward:
Such, such am I!—undone!

THOMSON'S *Edward and Eleanora.*

Farewell, old Scotia's bleak domains,
Far dearer than the torrid plains,
Where rich ananas † blow!

* Burns here alludes to the prolonged 'persecution' of Gavin Hamilton by Mr Auld and the Mauchline kirk-session.

† Burns here refers to the *ananassa sativa*, whose fruit is the anana or pine-apple, and which is indigenous to the West Indies, whither he was about to proceed. Possibly the allusion was suggested by Thomson's

'Witness thou, best anana, thou the pride
Of vegetable life.'

Farewell, a mother's blessing dear!
A mother's sigh! a sister's tear!
My Jean's heart-rending three!
Farewell, my Bess! tho' thou 'rt bereft
Of my paternal care,
A faithful brother I have left,
My part in him thou 'lt share!
Adieu too, to you too,
My Smith, my bosom frien';
When kindly you mind me,
O then befriend my Jean!

What bursting anguish tears my heart;
From thee, my Jeany, must I part!
Thou, weeping, answ'rest—'No!'
Alas! misfortune stares my face,
And points to ruin and disgrace,
I for thy sake must go!
Thee, Hamilton, and Aiken dear,
A grateful, warm adieu!
I, with a much-indebted tear,
Shall still remember you!
All-hail then, the gale then,
Wafts me from thee, dear shore!
It rustles, and whistles
I 'll never see thee more!

LINES WRITTEN ON A BANK-NOTE.*

Wae worth thy power, thou cursed leaf, wo worth
Fell source o' a' my woe and grief;
For lack o' thee I 've lost my lass,
For lack o' thee I scrimp my glass: stint

* 'The above verses, in the handwriting of Burns, are copied from a bank-note in the possession of Mr James F. Gracie of Dumfries. The note is of the Bank of Scotland, and is dated so far back as 1st March 1780.'—MOTHERWELL. The verses appear to have been first published in *The Morning Chronicle* of 27th May 1814; they appeared in the *Scots Magazine* for September of the same year.

I see the children of affliction
Unaided, through thy cursed restriction :
I 've seen the oppressor's cruel smile
Amid his hapless victim's spoil ;
And for thy potence vainly wished,
To crush the villain in the dust :
For lack o' thee, I leave this much-lov'd shore,
Never, perhaps, to greet old Scotland more.

R. B.

KYLE.

WRITTEN

ON A BLANK LEAF OF A COPY OF THE 'POEMS.'*

Once fondly lov'd, and still remember'd dear,
Sweet early object of my youthful vows,
Accept this mark of friendship, warm, sincere,
Friendship ! 'tis all cold duty now allows.—

And when you read the simple artless rhymes,
One friendly sigh for him, he asks no more,
Who, distant, burns in flaming torrid climes,
Or haply lies beneath th' Atlantic roar.

* Burns included these verses in the collection he made for Captain Riddel, with the note—'Written on the blank leaf of a copy of the first edition of my Poems, which I presented to an old sweetheart then married. 'Twas the girl I mentioned in my letter to Dr Moore, where I speak of taking the sun's altitude. Poor Peggy ! Her husband is an old acquaintance and a most worthy fellow. When I was taking leave of my Carrick relations, intending to go to the West Indies, when I took farewell of her, neither she nor I could speak a syllable. Her husband escorted me three miles on my road, and we both parted with tears.' 'Kirkoswald Peggy' had married John Neilson, farmer of Monnyfee, in the same parish, towards the end of 1784.

CHAPTER VII.

MOSSGIEL, 1786 (*continued*).

BURNS, as has been seen, had made an engagement with Charles Douglas of Port Antonio, in Jamaica, to act as bookkeeper, or assistant-overseer, on the estate which he managed, for three years, at the salary of thirty pounds a year. John Hutchinson, a correspondent of the poet at St Ann's, Jamaica, afterwards congratulated him on being saved from going thither, 'as,' says he, 'I have great reason to believe that Mr Douglas's employ would by no means have answered your expectations.'* So doubtful was the alternative to which the precariousness of his position at home had reduced him, that Burns feared poverty would oblige him to 'indent himself'—bind himself as an apprentice—that his employer might pay his passage to the West Indies. From this last humiliation he was saved by the success of his volume. As soon as he had nine guineas in his possession, he took a steerage-passage in a vessel which was expected to sail from Greenock at the beginning of September.

During August the poet seems to have been engaged in collecting the money due for his *Poems*. In all the principal towns of his own district he had friends who had exerted themselves

* Currie's edition of Burns, General Correspondence, No. xxxii. It does not follow, however, that Charles Douglas would have been an exceptionally hard taskmaster. Mr Leslie Stephen, in his biography of his brother, Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, relates that, in 1775, James Stephen, their grandfather, afterwards a Master in Chancery, had been thinking of volunteering under Washington, and had then accepted the offer of a 'bookkeeper's' place in Jamaica. He afterwards discovered that a 'bookkeeper' was an intermediate between the black slave-driver and the white overseer, and was doomed to a miserable and degrading life. He abandoned the idea, and went with his brother to Aberdeen University.

in procuring subscribers, and who were now drawing money on his behalf. His friend Aiken had distributed no fewer than a hundred and forty-five copies, being nearly a fourth of the whole impression. In the course of his rounds, Burns came to Maybole, where his Kirkoswald friend William Niven had been doing his best for the sale of the book. 'Willie,' according to a well-authenticated family tradition, 'assembled a few choice spirits at the King's Arms to do honour to the bard; and they spent a happy night together, Burns being, as usual, the life and soul of the party. Comic verses flashed from his mouth *al improvviso*, to the astonishment of the company. In the pride of his heart next morning, he determined on hiring from his host a certain poor hack mare, well known all along the road from Glasgow to Portpatrick as a beast that could now do little better than (to use his own words)

—— hoyte and hoble,
And wintle like a sawmont coble.

"Willie" and a few others of his Maybole friends walked out of town before him, for the purpose of taking leave at a particular spot; and before he came up, they had, by way of keeping up the style of the preceding evening, prepared a few mock heroics in which to bid him speed on his journey. Burns received their salute with subdued merriment; and when their spokesman had done, broke out with: "What need of all this fine parade of verse, my friends? It would have been quite enough if you had said just this—

Here comes Burns
On Rosinante;
She 's d—— poor
But he 's d—— canty!"

And then he went on his way.' When he was back at Mossgiel, he recalled the meeting in a letter

TO MR WILLIAM NIVEN, MERCHT., MAYBOLE,
CARE OF THOMAS PIPER, SURGEON, TO BE LEFT AT DR CHARLES'S SHOP, AYR.

MY DEAR FRIEND—I have been very throng [busy] ever since I saw you, and have not got the whole of my promise performed to you; but you know the old proverb—'The break o' a day 's no the break o' a bargain.' Have patience and I will pay you all. I thank you with the

best heartfelt sincerity for the worthy knot of lads you introduced me to. Never did I meet with as many congenial souls together, without one discordant jar in the concert. To all and each of them make my friendly compliments, particularly 'spunkie youthfu' Tammie.'* Remember me in the most respectful manner to the Bailie and Mrs Niven,† Mr Dunn‡ and the two truly worthy old gentlemen I had the honor of being introduced to on Friday; tho' I am afraid the conduct you forced me on may make them see me in a light I would fondly think I do not deserve.

I will perform the next of my promise soon. In the meantime, remember this,—never blow my sonnets among the million, as I would abhor to hear every prentice mouthing my poor performances in the streets. Every one of my Mayhole friends are welcome to a copy, if they chuse; but I wish them to go no farther. I mean it as a small mark of my respect for them—a respect as sincere as the love of dying saints.—I am ever, my dr. Wm., Your oblidged, ROBT. BURNS.

Mossgiel, 8th August 1786.

After a few weeks, when the admiration everywhere expressed for the *Poet* began to throw a lustre on the name of Burns, Mr Armour ceased to give him any reason for fear as to his personal liberty. He was living quietly at Mossgiel when, on a Sunday evening, 31 September, a brother of Jean came to tell him that she had been delivered of twins.§ The feeling of the moment he thus expressed in a characteristic letter to his most intimate friend:

MR JOHN RICHMOND, EDINBURGH.

Wish me luck, dear Richmond! Armour has just brought me a fine boy and girl at one throw. God bless the little dears!

Green grow the rashes, O,
Green grow the rashes, O,
A feather bed is no sae saft
As the bosoms o' the lasses, O.

ROBT. BURNS.

Mossgiel, Sunday, 3rd Sept. 1786.

* According to one account, this was Thomas Piper, assistant to Dr Hugh Logan, long the sole medical practitioner in Mayhole. According to another account, 'spunkie youthfu' Tammie' was a younger brother of Dr Logan. He migrated to Jamaica, and died there.

† The Bailie and Mrs Niven were William's father and mother.

‡ Mr David Dunn was the parish schoolmaster of Mayhole. He also became one of the magistrates of the town. He died in 1810.

§ 'Burns, Robert, Tenant in Mossgiel, and Jean Armour had twin children, Born 3d., and Baptised 5th Sept., called Robert and Jean.'—*Extract from Mauchline Parish Register.* Burns's child by Elizabeth Paton had been baptised only the year before. 'Robert Burns and Elizabeth Paton had their daughter Elizabeth baptized, May 24, 1785.'—*Tarbolton Parish Register.*

An arrangement was made that the Mossgiel family should take charge of one child, the boy, while the mother's friends should retain the other, the girl, who, however, did not long survive.

TO MR ROBERT MUIR, KILMARNOCK

(WITH A COPY OF 'THE CALF').

MY FRIEND MY BROTHER—Warm recollection of an absent Friend presses so hard on my heart, that I send him the prefixed bagatelle, pleased with the thought that it will greet the Man of my bosom, and be a kind of distant Language of Friendship.

You will have heard that poor Armour has repaid my amorous mortgages double. A very fine boy and girl have awakened a thought and feelings that thrill, some with tender pressure, and some with foreboding anguish, thro' my soul.

The poem was nearly an extemporaneous production, on a wager with Mr Hamilton that I would not produce a poem on the subject in a given time.*

If you think it worth while, read it to Charles [Samson], and Mr Wm. Parker; and if they chuse a copy of it, it is at their service, as they are men whose friendship I shall be proud to claim, both in this world and that which is to come.

I believe all hopes of staying at home will be abortive, but more of this when, in the latter part of next week, you shall be troubled with a visit from—my Dr Sir, your most devoted, ROBT. BURNS.

MOSSGIEL, *Friday Noon*, [*Sep. 8th*, 1786].

The 'bagatelle' was

THE CALF.

To the Rev. Mr [James Steven], on his Text, *Malachi*, iv. 2.—'And ye shall go forth, and grow up, as CALVES of the stall.'

Right, sir! your text I'll prove it true,
Tho' Heretics may laugh;
For instance, there 's yoursel just now, yourself
God knows, an unco *Calf!* a great

And should some Patron be so kind,
As bless you wi' a kirk, present you to a living

* The story goes, that the poet, in passing to the church at Mauchline, called on Mr Hamilton, who, being confined with gout, could not accompany him, but desired him to bring him a note of the sermon in no fewer than four stanzas. A bet was taken on the occasion, which Burns won by presenting Hamilton with four of these verses at the end of the service. Dr Mackenzie happened to call at the time, and was so amused with the

I doubt na, Sir, but then we 'll find, not
Ye 're still as great a *Stirk*. young bullock

But, if the Lover's raptur'd hour
Shall ever be your lot,
Forbid it, ev'ry heavenly Power,
You e'er should be a *Stot!* ox

Tho', when some kind, connubial Dear
Your But-and-ben adorns, two-roomed dwelling
The like has been that you may wear
A noble head of *horns*.

And, in your lug, most reverend J—, ear
To hear you roar and rowte, bellow
Few men o' sense will doubt your claims
To rank amang the *Nowte*. cattle

And when ye 're number'd wi' the dead,
Below a grassy hillock,
Wi' justice they may mark your head—
'Here lies a famous *Bullock!*'*

verses that he asked for a copy of them. The same evening Burns sent them, and two additional stanzas, with this note:

TO JOHN MACKENZIE, ESQ., SURGEON, MAUCHLINE.

DR. SIR—I am afraid the foregoing scrawl will be scarce intelligible.

The fourth and the last stanzas are added since I saw you to-day.—I am ever, Dear Sir, Yours, ROBT. BURNS.

8 *o'clock*, P.M.

Rev. James Steven, who was a native of Kilmarnock, was at this time assistant to the Rev. Robert Dow of Ardrossan. It is assumed that he and Mr Auld had 'exchanged pulpits,' and that thus it was quite by accident that Burns heard him preach. In 1787 Mr Steven became minister of Crown Court Chapel in London. In 1803 he was appointed to the parish of Kilwinning. An energetic preacher of the evangelical school, he was much respected, and received the degree of D.D. The date of his death is given as 15th February 1824.

* In *Scots Lore* (Glasgow) for February 1895, page 112, appeared a communication entitled 'A Burns Parallel,' from Mr J. J. Elliott. The parallel is of 'The Calf' to an epitaph in Latin which appears in Camden's *Remains Concerning Britain* (1674 edition, page 499). The following is the paraphrase by the 'Translatour:'

'All Christian men in my behalf
Pray for the soul of Sir John Calf.
O cruel death, as subtle as a Fox,
Who would not let this Calf live till he had been an Oxe,
That he might have eaten both brambles and thorns,
And when he came to his father's years might have worn horns.'

The bovine metaphor, Mr Elliott points out, did not receive that freedom of treatment which it afterwards met with in the Scottish poet's *jeu d'esprit*.

To this period are to be referred a few other pieces. In the following he celebrated the event of the 3d September:

NATURE'S LAW—A POEM.

HUMBLY INSCRIBED TO GAVIN HAMILTON, ESQ.

Great Nature spoke; observant man obey'd.—POPE.

Let other heroes boast their scars,
The marks of sturt and strife;
And other poets sing of wars,
The plagues of human life;
Shame fa' the fun; wi' sword and gun
To slap mankind like lumber!
I sing his name, and nobler fame,
Wha multiplies our number.

Great Nature spoke, with air benign,
'Go on, ye human race;
This lower world I you resign;
Be fruitful and increase.
The liquid fire of strong desire
I 've pour'd it in each bosom;
Here, on this hand, does Mankind stand,
And there is Beauty's blossom.'

The Hero of these artless strains,
A lowly bard was he,
Who sung his rhymes in Coila's plains,
Wi' meikle mirth an' glee; much
Kind Nature's care had given his share
Large, of the flaming current;
And, all devout, he never sought
To stem the sacred torrent.

He felt the powerful, high behest
Thrill, vital, thro' and thro';
And sought a corresponding breast,
To give obedience due:
Propitious Powers screen'd the young flow'rs,
From mildews of abortion;

And [illegible] the bard—a great reward—
  Has got a fruitful portion!

And auld mither Coil may count the day, happy Kyle
  As annual it returns,
The third of Libra's equal sway,
  That gave another Burns,*
With future rhymes, an' other times,
  To immortalize his sire;
To sing auld Coil in nobler style,
  With more poetic fire.

Ye Powers of peace, and peaceful song,
  Look down with gracious eyes;
And bless auld Coila, large and long,
  With multiplying joys;
Long may she stand to prop the land,
  The flower of ancient nations:
And Burnses spring, her fame to sing,
  To endless generations!

William Chalmers, writer in Ayr, who had drawn up the assignation of the poet's property, asked Burns to supply him with a poetical address for a girl whom he wished to marry. The poet, who 'had seen the lady, but was scarcely acquainted with her,' readily complied, by producing the following specimen of vicarious courtship:

WILLIE CHALMERS.

Wi' braw new branks in mickle pride, handsome—bridle—great
  And eke a braw new brechan, in addition—horse-collar
My Pegasus I 'm got astride,
  And up Parnassus pechin; panting
Whiles owre a bush wi' downward crush, over
  The doited beastie stammers; stupid—stumbles
Then up he gets, and off he sets,
  For sake o' Willie Chalmers.

* Robert Burns, who was born on 3d September 1786—the sun enters the sign of Libra in September—and died at Dumfries 14th May 1857. Although he wrote some passable verses, he did not justify his father's prediction.

I doubt na, lass, that weel kenn'd name — well-known
May cost a pair o' blushes;
I am nae stranger to your fame,
Nor his warm urgèd wishes.
Your bonie face, sae mild and sweet,
His honest heart enamours,
And faith ye 'll no be lost a whit,
Tho' wair'd on Willie Chalmers. — spent

Auld Truth hersel might swear ye 're fair,
And Honour safely back her;
And Modesty assume your air,
And ne'er a ane mistak her:
And sic twa love-inspiring een — such—eyes
Might fire even holy palmers;
Nae wonder then they 've fatal been
To honest Willie Chalmers.

I doubt na fortune may you shore — offer
Some mim-mou'd pouther'd priestie, — precise in speech—powdered clergyman
Fu' lifted up wi' Hebrew lore, — made conceited by
And band upon his breastie:
But oh! what signifies to you
His lexicons and grammars;
The feeling heart 's the royal blue,
And that 's wi' Willie Chalmers.

Some gapin', glowrin countra laird — goggling—landed proprietor
May warsle for your favour; — strive
May claw his lug, and straik his beard, — scratch—ear—stroke
And hoast up some palaver: — cough—nonsense
My bonie maid, before ye wed
Sic clumsy-witted hammers, — fellows
Seek Heaven for help, and barefit skelp — barefoot—run off
Awa wi' Willie Chalmers.

Forgive the Bard! my fond regard
For ane that shares my bosom,
Inspires my Muse to gie 'm his dues,
For deil a hair I roose him. — I don't flatter him in the least

May powers aboon unite you soon, above
And fructify your amours,
And every year come in mair dear more
To you and Willie Chalmers.

REPLY TO AN EPISTLE

RECEIVED FROM A TAILOR.*

What ails ye now, ye lousie b—h,
To thresh my back at sic a pitch?
Losh man! hae mercy wi' your natch, needle
Your bodkin's bauld, sharp
I did na suffer half sae much
Frae Daddie Auld.

What tho' at times, when I grow crouse, merry
I gie their wames a random pouse,
Is that enough for you to souse thrash
Your servant sae? so
Gae mind your seam, ye prick-the-louse,
An' jag-the-flae.

King David, o' poetic brief, reputation
Wrocht 'mang the lasses sic mischief such
As fill'd his after-life wi' grief,
An' bloodly rants, frolics
An' yet he 's rank'd amang the chief
O' lang-syne saunts. ancient saints

And maybe, Tam, for a' my cants, perhaps—tricks
My wicked rhymes, an' drucken rants,

* Thomas Walker, a tailor living at Pool, near Ochiltree. He was a friend of William Simson, the schoolmaster, to whom Burns addressed a poetical epistle. Walker, like Simson, could write verses. Seeing how successful his friend had been in 'drawing' Burns, he thought to do likewise, and sent the poet a long-winded epistle containing twenty-six stanzas. Burns took no notice of it. On the appearance of the Kilmarnock edition, Walker made another attempt to attract the poet's attention, and, by attacking him in the character of a moral censor, succeeded. A comparison of his MS. with the 'Epistle from a Tailor,' as printed by Stewart, shows that Simson, who reduced the original from twenty-one to ten stanzas, was almost as much responsible for the composition as Walker himself. An absurd theory was mooted after his death that Simson was also author of the 'Reply;' he never disputed the attribution of the verses to Burns in Stewart's publication. Besides, they proclaim themselves as by the same hand that wrote the 'Epistle to John Rankine.'

I'll gie auld cloven Clooty's haunts — Satan
An unco slip yet,
An' snugly sit amang the saunts, — saints
At Davie's hip yet.

But fegs! the Session says I maun — faith!—must
Gae fa' upo' anither plan — Go fall
Than garrin lasses cowp the cran
Clean heels owre body,
And sairly thole their mither's ban — sorely bear
Afore the howdy. — midwife

This leads me on to tell, for sport,
How I did wi' the Session sort—
Auld Clinkum at the inner port — the old bellman—door
Cry'd three times, 'Robin!
Come hither lad, an' answer for 't,
Ye 're blam'd for jobbin'!'

Wi' pinch I put a Sunday's face on,
An' snoov'd awa before the Session— — sneaked
I made an open, fair confession,
I scorn'd to lie;
An' syne Mess John, beyond expression, — then—the minister
Fell foul o' me.

A fornicator lown he call'd me, — worthless fellow
An' said my fau't frae bliss expell'd me; — fault
I own'd the tale was true he tell'd me,
'But what the matter?
(Quo' I) I fear unless ye geld me,
I'll ne'er be better!'

'Geld you! (quo' he) an' what for no? — why not
If that your right hand, leg or toe
Shou'd ever prove your sp'ritual foe,
You shou'd remember
To cut it aff—an' what for no
Your dearest member?'

'Na, na (quo' I), I 'm no for that,
Gelding 's nae better than 'tis ca't, — called
I 'd rather suffer for my faut,
A hearty flewit, — blow
As sair owre hip as ye can draw 't!
Tho' I should rue it.

'Or, gin ye like to end the bother,
To please us a', I 've just ae ither,
When next wi' yon lass I forgather, — meet
Whate'er betide it,
I 'll frankly gie her 't a' thegither,
An' let her guide it.'

But, sir, this pleas'd them warst ava, — worst of all
An' therefore, Tam, when that I saw,
I said 'Gude night,' and cam' awa,
And left the Session;
I saw they were resolvèd a'
On my oppression.

TAM SAMSON'S ELEGY.*

An honest man 's the noblest work of God.—POPE.

When this worthy old Sportsman went out last muir-fowl season, he supposed it was to be, in Ossian's phrase, 'the last of his fields;' and expressed an ardent wish to die and be buried in the muirs. On this hint the Author composed his Elegy and Epitaph.—*R. B.*, 1787.

Has auld Kilmarnock seen the Deil?
Or great Mackinlay † thrawn his heel? — sprained his ankle
Or Robertson ‡ again grown weel,
To preach an' read?§

* Thomas Samson was one of the poet's Kilmarnock friends—'a seedsman of good credit, a zealous sportsman, and a good fellow.'

† A certain preacher, a great favourite with the million. See 'The Ordination,' stanza ii.—*B.*

‡ Another preacher, an equal favourite with the few, and who was at that time ailing. For him also, see 'The Ordination,' stanza ix.—*B.*

§ For a minister to read his sermons, as was frequently done by members of the moderate school, was, and still is, often a cause of great unpopularity in Scotland.

'Na, waur than a'!' cries ilka chiel, worse—each
'*Tam Samson*'s dead!'

Kilmarnock lang may grunt an' grane, groan
An' sigh, an' sab, an' greet her lane, sob—cry in solitude
An' cleed her bairns, man, wife, an' wean, clothe—children (inhabitants)
In mourning weed;
To Death she's dearly pay'd the kane, rent in kind
Tam Samson's dead!

The Brethren o' the mystic 'level'
May hing their head in wofu' bevel, hang—slope
While by their nose the tears will revel,
Like ony bead;
Death's gien the Lodge an unco devel, heavy blow
Tam Samson's dead!

When Winter muffles up his cloak,
And binds the mire* like a rock;
When to the loughs the Curlers flock,† lochs
Wi' gleesome speed,
Wha will they station at the *cock*?
Tam Samson's dead!

He was the king of a' the Core, [corps] the whole of the curling fraternity
To guard, or draw, or wick a bore,
Or up the rink like *Jehu* roar,
In time o' need;
But now he lags on Death's *hog-score*,
Tam Samson's dead!‡

Now safe the stately Sawmont sail, salmon
And Trouts bedropp'd wi' crimson hail, spots

* *Mire*, pronounced as a dissyllable—*mi-ar*.

† Oddly enough, these lines are quoted at page 154 of Mr Phil Robinson's *The Poets' Birds* (Chatto and Windus, London, 1883) as a description, not of *curlers*, but of *curlews*! It is thus that Tam Samson and his friends appear in Mr Robinson's pages:

'To the lochs the Curlew flocks
Wi' gleesome speed.'

‡ In this verse are several terms of the curler's art. The *hog-score* is a line crossing the course, or rink, near its extremity: a stone which does not pass it is held as disgraced, and is set aside.

And Eels weel kend for souple tail, well-known—suppl
And Geds for greed, pike
Since dark in Death's *fish-creel* we wail fish-baske
Tam Samson dead!

Rejoice, ye birring Paitricks a'; partridge
Ye cootie * Moorcocks, crousely craw; boldly cro
Ye Maukins, cock your fud fu' braw, hares—tai
Withoutten dread; quite confidentl; withou
Your mortal Fae is now awa, foe—awa
Tam Samson's dead!

That woefu' morn be ever mourn'd
Saw him in shootin graith adorn'd, dres
While pointers round impatient burn'd,
Frae couples freed; fro
But, Och! he gaed and ne'er returned! wen
Tam Samson's dead!

In vain Auld age his body batters;
In vain the Gout his ancles fetters;
In vain the burns cam down like waters, rivulets—flood
An acre braid! broa
Now ev'ry auld wife, greetin, clatters old woman—weeping—calls ou
'Tam Samson's dead!'

Owre mony a weary hag he limpit, trench-like depressio in a peat mos
An' ay the tither shot he thumpit, always—othe
Till coward Death behind him jumpit,
Wi' deadly feide; enmit
Now he proclaims, wi' tout o' trumpet, blas
Tam Samson's dead!

When at his heart he felt the dagger,
He reel'd his wonted bottle-swagger,
But yet he drew the mortal trigger
Wi' weel-aim'd heed;
'L—d, five!' he cry'd, an' owre did stagger; ove
Tam Samson's dead!

* A term applied to those fowls whose legs are clad with feathers.—JAMIESON.

Ilk hoary Hunter mourn'd a brither; Every—brother
Ilk Sportsman-youth bemoan'd a father;
Yon auld gray stane, amang the heather,
Marks out his head,
Whare *Burns* has wrote, in rhyming blether, nonsense
Tam Samson's dead!

There, low he lies, in lasting rest;
Perhaps upon his mould'ring breast
Some spitefu' muirfowl bigs her nest, builds
To hatch an' breed:
Alas! nae mair he 'll them molest! no more
Tam Samson 's dead!*

When August winds the heather wave,
And Sportsmen wander by yon grave,
Three vollies let his mem'ry crave
O' pouther an' lead, powder
Till Echo answer frae her cave, from
Tam Samson 's dead!

Heav'n rest his saul, whare'er he be! soul
Is th' wish o' mony mae than me: many more
He had twa fauts, or maybe three, faults—perhaps
Yet what remead? remedy
Ae social, honest man want we: One—miss
Tam Samson 's dead!

THE EPITAPH.

Tam Samson's weel-worn clay here lies,
Ye canting Zealots, spare him!
If Honest Worth in Heaven rise,
Ye 'll mend or ye win near him. before—get

PER CONTRA.

Go, Fame, an' canter like a filly
Thro' a' the streets an' neuks o' *Killie*,† nooks

* This verse first appeared in the 1793 edition.

† 'Killie' is a phrase the country-folks sometimes use for the name of a certain town in the West [Kilmarnock].—*B.*

Tell ev'ry social, honest billie — fellow
To cease his grievin,
For yet, unskaith'd by Death's gleg gullie, — unharmed—sharp knife
Tam Samson's livin ! *

The poet's cousin and correspondent at Montrose had heard of his design to leave Scotland, and sent to plead for a visit before he should depart.

TO MR JAMES BURNESS, MONTROSE.

MOSSGIEL, *September* 26, 1786.

MY DEAR SIR—I this moment receive yours—receive it with the honest hospitable warmth of a friend's welcome. Whatever comes from you wakens always up the better blood about my heart, which your kind little recollections of my parental friends carries as far as it will go. 'Tis there that man is blest! 'Tis there, my friend, man feels a consciousness of something within him above the trodden clod! The grateful reverence to the hoary author of his being—the burning glow when he clasps the woman of his soul to his bosom—the tender yearnings of heart for the little angels to whom he has given existence—these nature has poured in milky streams about the human heart; and the man who never rouses them to action, by the inspiring influences of their proper objects, loses by far the most pleasurable part of his existence.

My departure is uncertain, but I do not think it will be till after harvest. I will be on very short allowance of time indeed, if I do not

* Tam Samson's house still stands almost opposite to the entrance to Kay Park, where the Mauchline Road, by which Burns was in the habit of entering Kilmarnock, turned to the left and descended the slope towards Tankard Ha' Brae, and opened into Sandbed Street. The interior of the house, including a low-roofed kitchen on the ground floor, and an upper room, to which access was had only by a stair, and which was used as an office, is still preserved. It is understood that Burns and Samson often met in the 'Bowling-green House,' a tavern kept by Alexander Patrick—commonly known as 'Sandy Paitrick'—the nurseryman's son-in-law. This house, which was situated in a lane at the head of the Faegate, where it joins the no longer existing Back Street, was widely celebrated for its home-brewed ale, which, from the wooden vessels in which it was served, was popularly known as 'caup ale.' 'Bowling-green House' is associated with the following anecdote, often told by another Kilmarnock intimate of Burns, William Parker, of Assloss House, about a mile north from Kilmarnock, on the road to Fenwick:

'At a jovial meeting one evening in Kilmarnock, at which Burns, Mr Parker, and Mr Samson were present, the poet, after the glass had been circulated pretty freely, said "He had indited a few lines, which, with the company's permission, he would read to them." The proposal was joyfully acceded to, and the poet immediately read aloud his inimitable "Tam Samson's Elegy"—

"Has auld Kilmarnock seen the Deil?" &c.

The company was convulsed with laughter, with the exception of one individual—the subject, *videlicet*, of the verses. As the burden, "Tam Samson's dead," came round, Tam twisted and turned his body into all variety of postures, evidently not on a bed of roses.

comply with your friendly invitation. When it will be I don't know, but if I can make my wish good, I will endeavour to drop you a line some time before. My best compliments to Mrs Burness; I should [be] equally mortified should I drop in when she is abroad; but of that I suppose there is little chance.

What I have wrote Heaven knows; I have not time to review it: so accept of it in the beaten way of friendship. With the ordinary phrase —perhaps rather more than the ordinary sincerity—I am, dear sir, ever yours, R. B.

Among the more notable men in Ayrshire who took notice of Burns about this time was Mr John M'Adam of Craigen-Gillan, a considerable estate in the parish of Straiton.

Burns saw the bait had taken, and fixing his keen black eyes on his victim (Sir Walter Scott says that Burns had the finest eyes in his head he had ever seen in mortal), mercilessly pursued his sport with waggish glee. At last flesh and blood could stand it no longer. Tam, evidently anything but pleased, roared out vociferously: "Ou ay, but I'm no deid yet!" Shouts of laughter followed from the rest, and Burns continued to read, ever and anon interrupted with Tam's "Ay, but I'm no deid yet!" After he had finished Burns took an opportunity of slipping out quietly, and returned in a few minutes with his well-known

"PER CONTRA.

Go, Fame, an' canter like a filly
Thro' a' the streets an' neuks o' Killie,
Tell ev'ry social, honest billie
To cease his grievin,
For yet, unskaith'd by Death's gleg gullie,
Tam Samson's livin!"

Tam was propitiated. Like the "humble auld beggar" in our humorous old Scotch ballad, "He helpit to drink his ain dregie," and the night was spent in the usual joyous manner where Burns was the presiding genius.'

The monument to Samson, a slab in the burial-ground of the Laigh Kirk, Kilmarnock, contains the following inscription:

'THOMAS SAMSON,
Died the 12th December 1795,
Aged 72 years.

Tam Samson's weel-worn clay here lies,
Ye canting Zealots spare him!
If Honest Worth in Heaven rise,
Ye'll mend or ye win near him.—BURNS.'

Oddly enough, Samson, who died in 1795; Robertson, who died in 1798; and Mackinlay, who died in 1841, and who are all mentioned in the first stanza of the elegy, are buried within a few feet of each other.

TO MR M'ADAM, OF CRAIGEN-GILLAN,*

IN ANSWER TO AN OBLIGING LETTER HE SENT IN THE COMMENCEMENT OF MY POETIC CAREER.

Sir, o'er a gill I gat your card, — got—note
I trow it made me proud; — assure you
See wha taks notice o' the bard! — who takes
I lap and cry'd fu' loud. — leaped

Now deil-ma-care about their jaw, — chaff
The senseless, gawky million; — foolish
I'll cock my nose aboon them a', — above
I'm roos'd by Craigen-Gillan! — praised

'Twas noble, Sir; 'twas like yoursel, — yourself
To grant your high protection:
A great man's smile ye ken fu' well, — know
Is ay a blest infection. — always

Tho', by his† banes who in a tub — bones
Match'd Macedonian Sandy! — Alexander the Great
On my ain legs thro' dirt and dub, — own—pool
I independent stand ay — — always

And when those legs to gude, warm kail, — good—broth
Wi' welcome canna bear me; — cannot
A lee dyke-side,‡ a sybow-tail, — onion
And barley-scone shall cheer me. — cake of barley-meal

Heaven spare you lang to kiss the breath — long
O' mony flow'ry simmers! — summers

* It has been conjectured that this poem was written before the issue of the Kilmarnock edition, and early in 1786. It is impossible to settle the date on internal evidence. Burns included it in the Glenriddel collection, and stated that it was 'wrote in Nanse Tinnock's, Mauchline.'

† Diogenes.

‡ 'Lee dyke-side' means the shelter afforded by the side of a dyke, or stone wall made without mortar. It is possible that Burns intended in this allusion to convey a compliment to the Laird of Craigen-Gillan, who had obtained a reputation in the district for the strength of the 'dykes,' or stone fences, which he encouraged his tenants and neighbours to erect. The Dalmellington *dykes* were long famous.

And bless your bonie lasses baith, both
I 'm tauld they 're loosome kimmers! told—lovable girls

And God bless young Dunaskin's* laird,
The blossom of our gentry!
And may he wear an auld man's beard,
A credit to his country.

We are told by Gilbert Burns that Sir William Cuninghame, of Robertland, in the parish of Stewarton, paid the poet some attention. It would further appear that Mrs Stewart of Stair, whose house he had visited when his friend Sillar was courting Margaret Orr, now sought his acquaintance. He addressed her thus:

TO MRS STEWART OF STAIR.†

[*September* 1786.]

MADAM—The hurry of my preparations for going abroad has hindered me from performing my promises so soon as I intended. I have here sent you a parcel of songs, &c., which never made their appearance except to a friend or two at most. Perhaps some of them may be no great entertainment to you, but of that I am far from being an adequate judge.‡ The song, to the tune of 'Ettrick Banks' ['The Lass o' Ballochmyle'], you will easily see the impropriety of exposing much, even in manuscript. I think, myself, it has some merit; both as a tolerable description of one of nature's sweetest scenes, a July evening; and one of the finest pieces of nature's workmanship, the finest indeed we know any thing of, an amiable, beautiful young woman; but I have no common friend to procure me that permission, without which I would not dare to spread the copy.

* Dunaskin was a small property north-west of Dalmellington, which had been purchased by Mr M'Adam. His son, who became Colonel M'Adam of Craigen-Gillan, was 'young Dunaskin's laird.'

† Mrs Stewart's maiden name, as has already been seen, was Catharine Gordon. She was the daughter and heiress of Thomas Gordon, younger of Earlston, in the parish of New Cumnock, and grand-daughter of Sir William Gordon of Earlston and Afton—on the papers of one of whose ancestors the popular Scottish romancist, Mr S. R. Crockett, has based his story of the times of the Covenanters, *The Men of the Moss-Hags*. In 1770 she married Alexander (afterwards Major-general) Stewart. They lived in Stair House, which had been purchased from the Stair family, for twenty years. Ultimately it was sold, passed after a time again into the possession of the Stair family, and Mrs Stewart built a house on the Enterkin estate, about a mile and a half from the village of Tarbolton—her third daughter married William Cunningham of Enterkin—and named it Afton Lodge. She died in 1818, having survived her husband twenty-four years.

‡ This 'parcel of songs,' subsequently known as 'The Stair MSS.,' and now dispersed, consisted of 'The Vision' (unabridged), 'The Lass o' Ballochmyle,' 'The gloomy Night is gathering fast,' 'My Nanie O,' 'Handsome Nell,' 'Song in the Character of a ruined Farmer,' 'Tho' cruel Fate should bid us part,' and 'Misgivings of Despondency on the approach of the Gloomy Monarch of the Grave.'

I am quite aware, Madam, what task the world would assign me in this letter. The obscure Bard, when any of the Great condescend to take notice of him, should heap the altar with the incense of flattery. Their high ancestry, their own great and godlike qualities and actions, should be recounted with the most exaggerated description. This, madam, is a task for which I am altogether unfit. Besides a certain disqualifying pride of heart, I know nothing of your connexions in life, and have no access to where your real character is to be found—the company of your compeers; and more, I am afraid that even the most refined adulation is by no means the road to your good opinion.

One feature of your character I shall ever with grateful pleasure remember, the reception I got when I had the honor of waiting on you at Stair. I am little acquainted with politeness, but I know a good deal of benevolence of temper and goodness of heart. Surely, did those in exalted stations know how happy they could make some classes of their inferiors by condescension and affability, they would never stand so high, measuring out with every look the height of their elevation.*

R. B.

At this time the Rev. George Lawrie † was minister of the parish of Loudon, a few miles from Mossgiel. He was an excellent specimen of the old moderate clergy—sensible, upright, kind-hearted, and with no despicable taste in literature. He was the friend of Blair, Robertson, Blacklock, and other notable Scottish men of letters. He had read the Kilmarnock volume with great delight. He sent a copy to his friend Blacklock at Edinburgh, asking his opinion of it, and hinting that he might show it to Dr Blair. At Loudon manse, occupying a beautiful situation on Irvine Water, called St Margaret's Hill, Burns paid Mr Lawrie a visit. He was received with the utmost cordiality. The family consisted, besides the minister and his wife, of a son rising into manhood, three grown-up daughters, and a fourth, quite a young girl. One of the daughters having played the spinet to Burns, he told her that she knew the magic way to a poet's heart. Mr Lawrie, in spite of his cloth, was partial to dancing, on the ground that it

* Here ends this letter as it appears in the Glenriddel volume. For some reason Currie added these superfluously sycophantic words, 'but condescend as sweetly as did Mrs Stewart of Stair.'

† The Rev. George Lawrie, who received the degree of D.D. from the University of Glasgow in 1791, died in 1799, in his seventy-eighth year. He was succeeded in the pastorate of Loudon parish by his son Archibald, who had been appointed his assistant in 1793. The Rev. Archibald Lawrie—whose first wife, Anne, it may be noted, was the sister of the Dr James M'Kitterick Adair who married Charlotte Hamilton, one of Burns's heroines—continued minister of Loudon till his death in 1837, at the age of sixty-nine.

was conducive both to health and to cheerfulness. So after dinner on the evening of Burns's visit a dance was improvised, in which Burns and other guests joined. Burns, though somewhat heavy-limbed, was a good dancer. One of the daughters of the manse afterwards stated that he 'kept time admirably.' He retired for the night, deeply touched by the simple refinement, good-nature, and mutual affection of the family, as well as by the kindness which had been shown to himself. In the morning, finding him somewhat late in coming down to breakfast, Mr Lawrie's son went to inquire for him, and meeting him on the stair, asked how he had slept. 'Not well,' he answered; 'the fact is, I have been praying half the night. If you go up to my room, you will find my prayers on the table.' The lad did so, and found these verses, afterwards published by Burns, with the descriptive title:

LYING AT A REVEREND FRIEND'S HOUSE ONE NIGHT, THE AUTHOR LEFT THE FOLLOWING

VERSES

IN THE ROOM WHERE HE SLEPT:—

O Thou dread Pow'r, who reign'st above!
I know Thou wilt me hear;
When for this scene of peace and love,
I make my pray'r sincere.

The hoary Sire—the mortal stroke,
Long, long be pleas'd to spare;
To bless his little filial flock,
And show what good men are.

She, who her lovely Offspring eyes
With tender hopes and fears,
O bless her with a Mother's joys,
But spare a Mother's tears!

Their hope, their stay, their darling youth,
In manhood's dawning blush;
Bless him, Thou God of love and truth,
Up to a Parent's wish.

The beauteous, seraph Sister-band,
With earnest tears I pray,
Thou know'st the snares on ev'ry hand,
Guide Thou their steps alway.

When soon or late they reach that coast,
O'er life's rough ocean driven,
May they rejoice, no wand'rer lost,
A family in Heaven!

This Prayer was not, however, the only expression which the poet gave of the feeling inspired by the scene of the preceding evening. Louisa Lawrie had long in her possession a scrap of verse in the poet's handwriting—a mere trifle, but apparently intended as part of a lyric description of the manse festivities. 'The locality,' according to a relative of the family, 'corresponds perfectly—the old castle of Newmills, visible from the manse windows in those days, before the trees were grown up—the hills opposite, to the south—and the actual scene of enjoyment, standing on the very banks of the Irvine. Some little poetic licence must be allowed the poet with respect to his lengthening the domestic dance so far on in the night:'

SONG.

TUNE—*Irvine's Bairns are bonnie a'.*

The night was still, and o'er the hill
The moon shone on the castle wa'; wall
The mavis sang, while dew-drops hang thrush—hung
Around her on the castle wa'.

Sae merrily they danced the ring
Frae eenin till the cock did craw; evening—crow
And aye the ower-word o' the spring refrain, burden—tune
Was Irvine's bairns are bonnie a'.

The time for parting came. Mr Lawrie was deeply affected by the consideration that a young man of such genius as Burns possessed should be destined to expatriation to the West Indies, but was not in a position to suggest any better prospect. A wide stretch

The gloomy night is gathering fast,
Loud roars the wild inconstant blast.

of moor had to be passed by Burns on his way home.* 'His mind was strongly affected by parting for ever with a scene where he had tasted so much elegant and social pleasure, and depressed by the contrasted gloom of his prospects. The aspect of nature harmonised with his feelings. It was a lowering and heavy evening in the end [beginning?] of autumn. The wind was up, and whistled through the rushes and long spear-grass which bent before it. The clouds were driving across the sky; and cold pelting showers at intervals added discomfort of body to cheerlessness of mind.' Under these circumstances, and in this frame, Burns composed what he considered as 'the last song he should ever measure in Caledonia:'

FAREWELL, THE BONIE BANKS OF AYR.

TUNE—*Roslin Castle.*

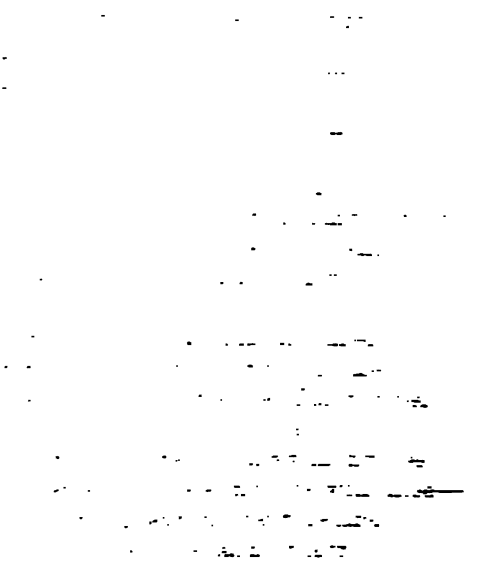
I composed this song as I conveyed my chest so far on my road to Greenock, where I was to embark in a few days for Jamaica. I meant it as my farewell dirge to my native land.—*R. B.*

The gloomy night is gath'ring fast,
Loud roars the wild, inconstant blast,
Yon murky cloud is foul with rain,
I see it driving o'er the plain;
The Hunter now has left the moor,
The scatt'red coveys meet secure,
While here I wander, prest with care,
Along the lonely banks of Ayr.

The Autumn mourns her rip'ning corn
By early Winter's ravage torn;
Across her placid, azure sky,
She sees the scowling tempest fly:
Chill runs my blood to hear it rave,
I think upon the stormy wave,†
Where many a danger I must dare,
Far from the bonie banks of Ayr.

* Professor Walker gave this narrative from the conversation of Burns when in Edinburgh.

† Variation— 'The whistling wind affrightens me,
I think upon the raging sea.'



which he had fitted up as ... young men attending school and ... 'If the young men were enumerated ... from the vanity, and enabled, by education, to ... life, the catalogue would naturally excite ... Reading the Kilmarnock volume sent him by his friend Lawrie, he was greatly delighted, and expressed his pleasure in a letter

* Dr Blacklock, who was born at Annan, in Dumfriesshire, in 1721, was ordained in 1762 to the pastorate of the parish of Kirkcudbright, to which he had been presented by the Earl of Selkirk. But the parishioners opposed his settlement, on the ground that his blindness rendered him incapable of discharging his duties, and had resort to legal proceedings with a view to his rejection. After three years he accepted an annuity, and left an uncomfortable position to settle in Edinburgh. Dr Blacklock retired from active work the year after he wrote this memorable letter. He died in 1791.

TO THE REV. MR GEORGE LAWRIE,
ST MARGARET'S HILL, KILMARNOCK.

EDIN., *Sep. 4th*, 1786.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR—I ought to have acknowledged your favor long ago, not only as a testimony of your kind remembrance, but as it gave me an opportunity of sharing one of the finest, and, perhaps, one of the most genuine entertainments, of which the human mind is susceptible. A number of avocations retarded my progress in reading the poems; at last, however, I have finished that pleasing perusal. Many instances have I seen of nature's force and beneficence, exerted under numerous and formidable disadvantages; but none equal to that, with which you have been kind enough to present me. There is a pathos and delicacy in his serious poems; a vein of wit and humour in those of a more festive turn, which cannot be too much admired, nor too warmly approved; and I think I shall never open the book without feeling my astonishment renewed and increased. It was my wish to have expressed my approbation in verse; but whether from declining life or a temporary depression of spirits, it is at present out of my power to accomplish that agreeable intention.

Mr [Dugald] Stewart, professor of morals in this university, had formerly read me three of the poems, and I had desired him to get my name inserted among the subscribers: but whether this was done or not I never could learn. I have little intercourse with Dr Blair, but will take care to have the poems communicated to him by the intervention of some mutual friend. It has been told me by a gentleman, to whom I shewed the performances, and who sought a copy with diligence and ardour, that the whole impression is already exhausted. It were therefore much to be wished, for the sake of the young man, that a second edition, more numerous than the former, could immediately be printed; as it appears certain that its intrinsic merit, and the exertion of the author's friends, might give it a more universal circulation than any thing of the kind which has been published within my memory.

T. BLACKLOCK.

Mr Lawrie communicated this letter to Gavin Hamilton—although after an unaccountable delay of about a fortnight—that it might be placed in the hands of the poet. The receipt of it at Mossgiel was as a burst of sunshine on a wintry day. Burns said truly, 'The doctor belonged to a set of critics for whose applause I had not dared to hope.' New prospects were opened to his poetic ambition. With persons of reflection, however, hopes that come after long experience of depression and suffering are

usually succeeded by new fears. 'His [Blacklock's] idea, that I would meet with every encouragement for a second edition, fired me so much that away I posted for Edinburgh, without a single acquaintance in town or a single letter of recommendation in my pocket.' This is not strictly accurate. Blacklock said nothing of Edinburgh, and Burns did not proceed to that city *till upwards of two months after*. No doubt the letter had been treated as an invitation to the capital; but it had not the immediate effect of attracting him thither. For weeks after its receipt, we find him still contemplating the West Indies as his most likely destiny, although disposed to stay at home if possible. Indeed it can scarcely be doubted that, but for the accidental delay of the vessel in which his passage was taken out, Burns would have been on his way across the Atlantic long before any decided temptation arose to induce him to visit Edinburgh.*

It was on the day before Blacklock wrote his letter that the birth of Jean Armour's twin children was announced to the poet, and this event was not without its influence, also, in the shaping of his career. He felt the claim of these infants upon his care, and desired to remain at home for their protection. At the same time his misfortunes and mortifications were powerful reasons for holding by his original plan. In the circumstances, his friends Aiken and Hamilton took some trouble to ascertain if there was not a chance of securing an appointment in the Excise, as a means of providing for him at home. But even of this change of fortune, if realised, he feared that he might not be able to take advantage. While thus in suspense, he took his usual share in the labours of the harvest, and visited his friends at Ayr and elsewhere. The following undated letter to Ballantine was probably written about this time:

* What is here presented regarding the connection of Burns with the minister of Loudon is arranged from the narrative of Professor Walker (*Life of Burns*), Gilbert Burns (Currie vol. iii., Appendix), and statements made by Mr Lawrie's family. The date assigned by Walker for Burns's visit is the 'end of autumn;' but this is not compatible either with the date of Dr Blacklock's letter, afterwards received, nor with the accounts we have of Burns' intentions in other quarters. That degree of determination for the West Indies which alone could have prompted the 'Farewell, the bonie Banks of Ayr,' had certainly ceased before September was far advanced, though the plan was not wholly abandoned till October had expired. The song itself describes autumn objects and circumstances, though under an intrusion of wintry weather. Severe cold blasts are certainly not uncommon at any period of a Scottish autumn, but it did happen that there was a violent storm, accompanied by rain and lightning, in the west of Scotland on the two last days of August and first of September of that year.

TO JOHN BALLANTINE, ESQ., AYR.*

Mr Ballantine will accept of the foregoing Ballad as all a Poet, who owes him much, can give. I have seen a print of the old Cross of Ayr—'tis not to be bought—could you send me one just now, that I might take it with me. I shall be here for about an hour yet. R. B.

SIMPSON'S.

It seems to have been at the close of autumn that Burns composed 'The Brigs of Ayr,' the model of which he found in Fergusson's 'Dialogue between the Plainstanes and Causeway.' At this time a new bridge was being built over the Ayr, to connect the town with its suburbs, and to supersede the existing bridge, which is still standing, about 300 yards off. The Auld Brig, which consists of four high and strongly built arches, had been found too narrow and otherwise inadequate for the traffic between the two sides of the river. But it had its admirers in the town, partly on account of its strength, and partly on account of its age. It would appear to have been built about the end of the fifteenth century. Common belief, however, claimed for it much greater antiquity, and asserted that it had been built in the reign of Alexander III., at the expense of two maiden ladies of the name of Love; figures supposed to represent them used to be pointed out at the southern end of one of the parapets. The Auld Brig, therefore, had its partisans, who maintained that if it were repaired and enlarged, it would meet the demands of a growing traffic. The advocates of a new bridge however, prevailed, chiefly through the exertions of Burns's friend Ballantine,† who was then Dean of Guild. The building of the bridge was begun in May 1786, and finished in November 1788. The controversy suggested 'The Brigs of Ayr.' Burns dedicated it to Ballantine, although it is evident that he himself belonged to the 'Auld Brig' party.

* This letter forms part of the Watson Bequest, in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery at Edinburgh, and is here published for the first time. It will be seen that Burns alludes to 'Simpson's' in 'The Brigs of Ayr.'

† John Ballantine was a merchant and banker in Ayr, where he was born in 1743. Taking an active interest in the municipal affairs of the town, like his father and grandfather before him, he became Dean of Guild, and in 1787, Provost. In 1812 he died, unmarried, at his residence, Castlehill.

THE BRIGS OF AYR.

A POEM.*

INSCRIBED TO JOHN BALLANTINE, ESQ., AYR.

The simple Bard, rough at the rustic plough,
Learning his tuneful trade from ev'ry bough;
The chanting linnet, or the mellow thrush,
Hailing the setting sun, sweet, in the green thorn bush;
The soaring lark, the perching red-breast shrill,
Or deep-ton'd plovers, grey, wild-whistling o'er the hill;
Shall he, nurst in the Peasant's lowly shed,
To hardy Independence bravely bred,
By early Poverty to hardship steel'd,
And train'd to arms in stern Misfortune's field,
Shall he be guilty of their hireling crimes,
The servile, mercenary Swiss † of rhymes?
Or labour hard the panegyric close,
With all the venal soul of dedicating Prose?
No! though his artless strains he rudely sings,
And throws his hand uncouthly o'er the strings,
He glows with all the spirit of the Bard,
Fame, honest fame, his great, his dear reward.
Still, if some Patron's gen'rous care he trace,
Skill'd in the secret, to bestow with grace;
When Ballantine befriends his humble name,
And hands the rustic stranger up to fame,
With heartfelt throes his grateful bosom swells,
The godlike bliss, to give, alone excels.

'Twas when the stacks get on their winter-hap, coverin
And thack and rape secure the toil-won crap; thatch and straw rope—cro
Potatoe-bings are snuggèd up frae skaith heaps—from dang
Of coming Winter's biting, frosty breath;

* In a beautiful manuscript of this poem, now in the possession of the Earl of Ros bery, the title is given as 'The Brigs of Ayr, a True Story.'

† Swiss soldiers were in the habit of hiring themselves to any country that chose to pa for their services, and, as was shown at the fall of the Bastille in 1789, fought well.

The bees, rejoicing o'er their summer-toils,
Unnumber'd buds an' flow'rs' delicious spoils,*
Seal'd up with frugal care in massive waxen piles,
Are doom'd by man, that tyrant o'er the weak,
The death o' devils, smoor'd wi' brunstane reek : smothered—brimstone smoke
The thundering guns are heard on ev'ry side,
The wounded coveys, reeling, scatter wide ;
The feather'd field-mates, bound by Nature's tie,
Sires, mothers, children, in one carnage lie :
(What warm, poetic heart but inly bleeds,
And execrates man's savage, ruthless deeds !)
Nae mair the flow'r in field or meadow springs ; more
Nae mair the grove with airy concert rings,
Except perhaps the Robin's whistling glee,
Proud o' the height o' some bit half-lang tree : little half-grown
The hoary morns precede the sunny days,
Mild, calm, serene, wide-spreads the noontide blaze,
While thick the gossamour waves wanton in the rays.

'Twas in that season, when a simple Bard,
Unknown and poor, Simplicity's reward,
Ae night, within the ancient brugh of *Ayr*, One—burgh
By whim inspir'd, or haply prest wi' care, perhaps
He left his bed, and took his wayward route,
And down by *Simpson's*† wheel'd the left about :
(Whether impell'd by all-directing Fate,
To witness what I after shall narrate ;‡
Or whether, rapt in meditation high,
He wander'd out he knew not where nor why).
The drowsy *Dungeon-clock*§ had number'd two,
And *Wallace-tow'r*‖ had sworn the fact was true :

* Variation—' . . . And floweret's nect'rine spoils.'

† A noted tavern at the Auld Brig end.—*B.*

‡ In a MS. copy, here occur two lines omitted in print :

' Or penitential pangs for former sins
Led him to rove by quondam Merran D—n's.'

§ The clock on the steeple of the Tolbooth or Old Jail of Ayr, which stood in the centre of the Sandgate. The whole structure was removed in 1826, from its having been found an obstruction to traffic.

‖ The clock in the Wallace Tower—an old baronial tower at the corner of High Street and Mill Vennel, which had originally belonged to the Cathcarts of Corbieston, but had

The tide-swoln Firth, with sullen-sounding roar,
Through the still night dash'd hoarse along the shore:
All else was hush'd as Nature's closèd e'e; eye
The silent moon shone high o'er tow'r and tree:
The chilly frost, beneath the silver beam,
Crept gently, crusting-o'er the glittering stream.—

When, lo! on either hand the list'ning Bard,
The clanging sugh of whistling wings is heard;* rustle
Two dusky forms dart thro' the midnight air,
Swift as the *Gos* † drives on the wheeling hare;
Ane on th' *Auld Brig* his airy shape uprears, One
The ither flutters o'er the *rising piers:* other
Our warlock Rhymer instantly descry'd wizard
The Sprites that owre the *Brigs of Ayr* preside. over
(That Bards are second-sighted is nae joke,
And ken the lingo of the sp'ritual folk; know the language of spirits
Fays, Spunkies, Kelpies, a', they can explain them, will-o'-the-wisps—waters
And ev'n the vera deils they brawly ken them.) spirits well know
Auld Brig appear'd of ancient Pictish race,
The vera wrinkles Gothic‡ in his face: very
He seem'd as he wi' Time had warstl'd lang, wrestled
Yet teughly doure, he bade an unco bang. toughly obstinate—withstood a heavy stroke
New Brig was buskit in a braw new coat, dressed
That he, at Lon'on, frae ane Adams, § got;
In 's hand five taper staves as smooth 's a bead,
Wi' virls an' whirlygigums at the head. rings—useless ornaments
The Goth was stalking round with anxious search,
Spying the time-worn flaws in ev'ry arch;

been acquired by the town council in 1673. How it came to be styled the Wallace Tower is not accurately known. It was replaced in 1834 by a handsome Gothic tower, 113 feet high, and has in its front a statue of Wallace.

* Variation— 'When lo! before our Bardie's wond'ring e'en
The Brigs of Ayr's twa sprites are seen.'

† The goshawk, or falcon.—*B.*

‡ This would almost seem to suggest that Burns held, with Pinkerton, that the Picts were Teutons, and spoke a Gothic dialect.

§ The celebrated Robert Adam was the architect of the New Bridge. At all events, it appears from Ayr burgh accounts, that he was paid for a plan of a bridge which he had supplied. There is a local tradition that Alexander Steven, mason, who built the structure, was also its architect. Robert Adam was the second son of William Adam of Maryborough, near Kinross. He was born in Kirkcaldy in 1728, and died in 1792. He is buried in Westminster Abbey. His father and four brothers were all architects.

It chanc'd his new-come neebor took his e'e, neighbour—eye
And e'en a vex'd and angry heart had he!
Wi' thieveless sneer to see his modish mien, cold
He, down the water, gies him this guid-een— good evening

AULD BRIG.

I doubt na, frien', ye 'll think ye 're nae sheepshank,*
Ance ye were streekit o'er frae bank to bank! Once—stretched —from
But gin ye be a Brig as auld as me, if—old
Tho' faith that day,† I doubt, ye 'll never see,
There 'll be, if that date† come, I'll wad a boddle, wager a half-farthing
Some fewer whigmeleeries i' your noddle. whims—head

NEW BRIG.

Auld Vandal! ye but show your little mense, manners
Just much about it wi' your scanty sense;
Will your poor, narrow foot-path of a street,
Where twa wheel-barrows tremble when they meet,
Your ruin'd,‡ formless bulk o' stane and lime, stone
Compare wi' bonie *Brigs* o' modern time?
There 's men o' taste wou'd tak the *Ducat-stream*,§
Tho' they should cast the vera sark and swim, strip to the skin
E'er they would grate their feelings wi' the view
Of sic an ugly, Gothic hulk as you.

AULD BRIG.

Conceited gowk! puff'd up wi' windy pride! fool
This mony a year I've stood the flood an' tide; many
And tho' wi' crazy eild I'm sair forfairn, old age—sadly enfeebled
I 'll be a *Brig* when ye 're a shapeless cairn!‖ heap of stones

* No contemptible or worthless thing.

† In the first Edinburgh edition (1787) these words are transposed.

‡ Variation—'Tasteless.'

§ A noted ford, just above the Auld Brig.—*B.* It was the only passage to the town before the Auld Brig was built. During the storms of winter and spring the ford was the scene of much loss of life.

‖ The sinister prophecy of the Auld Brig was fulfilled to the letter. In 1877 the New Brig was so injured by floods that the arch at the south end fell. The whole structure was pulled down, and stood revealed 'a shapeless cairn.' It was rebuilt at a cost of £15,000, yet, in 1881-1882, £2000 more had to be spent in repairing it. Its weakness lay in its foundations, which, as events proved, were not—at all events at the south end—laid on

As yet ye little ken about the matter, know
But twa-three winters will inform ye better. two or three
When heavy, dark, continued, a'-day rains, whole-day
Wi' deepening deluges o'erflow the plains;
When from the hills where springs the brawling *Coil*,
Or stately *Lugar's* mossy fountains boil,
Or where the *Greenock* winds his moorland course,
Or haunted Garpal* draws his feeble source,
Arous'd by blust'ring winds an' spotting† thowes, thaws
In mony a torrent down his sna-broo rowes; snow-broth rolls
While crashing ice, borne on the roaring speat, flood
Sweep dams, an' mills, an' brigs, a' to the gate; out of the way
And from *Glenbuck*,‡ down to the *Ratton-Key*,§
Auld *Ayr* is just one lengthen'd, tumbling sea;
Then down ye 'll hurl, deil nor ye never rise!
And dash the gumlie jaups up to the pouring skies, muddy splashing waves
A lesson sadly-teaching, to your cost,
That Architecture's noble art is lost!

NEW BRIG.

Fine *architecture*, trowth I needs must say 't o' 't, in truth
The L—d be thankit that we 've tint the gate o' 't! lost—way
Gaunt, ghastly, ghaist-alluring edifices, ghost
Hanging with threat'ning jut like precipices;
O'er-arching, mouldy, gloom-inspiring coves,
Supporting roofs fantastic, stony groves;

solid rock. It used to be believed in Ayr that Burns gained his knowledge of this weakness from the master of the works or foreman builder on the New Brig, who was a personal friend, and so was enabled to prophesy from knowledge. This view gains some countenance from the fact that Burns, while he speaks of the 'rising' piers, yet alludes contemptuously to the columns as 'five taper staves,' and even to the open balusters over each arch as 'virls and whirlygigums,' thus, to all appearance, indicating an intimate acquaintance with the structure as it was when completed. This, however, he could have obtained from a drawing of the bridge—such a drawing as he might see in the hands of the master of works. The foundations of the Auld Brig were found in 1892 to have been so injured that steps had to be taken to secure its stability also.

* The banks of Garpal Water is one of the few places in the West of Scotland, where those fancy scaring beings, known by the name of *Ghaists*, still continue pertinaciously to inhabit.—*B.* The streams mentioned in these few lines are tributaries of the Ayr.

† Variation—'Spotted.'

‡ The source of the river Ayr.—*B.* The village of Glenbuck is situated amid the hills of Muirkirk parish, in the east of Ayrshire, and less than a mile from the Lanarkshire border.

§ A small landing-place above the large key.—*B.*

Windows and doors in nameless sculptures drest,
With order, symmetry, or taste unblest;
Forms like some bedlam Statuary's dream,
The craz'd creations of misguided whim;
Forms might be worshipp'd on the bended knee,
And still the *second dread command* * be free,
Their likeness is not found on earth, in air, or sea.
Mansions that would disgrace the building † taste
Of any mason reptile, bird or beast:
Fit only for a doited monkish race, stupid
Or frosty maids forsworn the dear embrace,
Or Cuifs of later times, wha held the notion fools
That sullen gloom was sterling, true devotion:
Fancies that our guid Brugh denies protection, ‡ burgh
And soon may they expire, unblest wi' resurrection!

AULD BRIG.

O ye, my dear-remember'd, ancient yealings, contemporaries
Were ye but here to share my wounded feelings!
Ye worthy Proveses, an' mony a Bailie, provosts
Wha in the paths o' righteousness did toil ay;
Ye dainty Deacons, an' ye douce Conveeners, § worthy—sedate
To whom our moderns are but causey-cleaners; street-sweepers
Ye godly Councils wha hae blest this town; have
Ye godly Brethren o' the sacred gown,
Wha meekly gie your hurdies to the smiters; posteriors
And (what would now be strange), ‖ ye godly Writers:
A' ye douce folk I've borne aboon the broo, sedate—above—water
Were ye but here, what would ye say or do!
How would your spirits groan in deep vexation,
To see each melancholy alteration;
And agonising, curse the time and place
When ye begat the base, degenerate race! begot

* The Second Commandment forbids the making of 'likenesses' of anything in 'the heaven above,' &c. But it was not violated in the case of the uncouth figures alluded to by 'New Brig,' as these were not 'likenesses' of existing things.

† Variation—'Bigging.'

‡ An allusion to the moderatism of the Ayr clergy.

§ 'Deacon' and 'convener' are officials of a trade guild.

‖ A hit at the 'easy professions' of the Ayr *writers* or solicitors known to Burns.

Nae langer Rev'rend Men, their country's glory, No longer
In plain braid Scots hold forth a plain braid story! broad
Nae langer thrifty citizens, an' douce,
Meet owre a pint, or in the Council-house;
But staumrel, corky-headed, graceless, Gentry, half-witted
The herryment and ruin of the * country; spoliation
Men three-parts made by tailors and by barbers,
Wha waste your weel-hain'd gear on d——'d new brigs and harbours! carefully hoarded wealth

NEW BRIG.

Now haud you there! for faith ye 've said enough, hold
And muckle mair than ye can mak to through.† much more—make good
As for your Priesthood, I shall say but little,
Corbies and *Clergy* are a shot right kittle: ‡
But, under favor o' your langer beard,
Abuse o' Magistrates might weel be spar'd: well
To liken them to your auld-warld squad, antiquated
I must needs say, comparisons are odd. §
In Ayr, *Wag-wits* nae mair can hae a handle more—have
To mouth 'a Citizen,' a term o' scandal: ‖
Nae mair the Council waddles down the street,
In all the pomp of ignorant conceit; ¶
Men ** wha grew wise priggin owre hops an' raisins, higgling over
Or gather'd lib'ral views in Bonds and Seisins: sasine

* Variation—'their.'

† Inserted here in MS. copy:

'That 's aye a string auld doited Graybeards harp on,
A topic for their peevishness to carp on.'

‡ This may be rendered—'Ravens and ministers are troublesome creatures to shoot at.

§ In Lord Rosebery's manuscript these two lines run:

'To even them to your auld-warld bodies,
I needs must say "Comparisons are odious."'

In this case Burns's second thoughts would not appear to have been his best.

‖ These lines mean—'Wags can no longer make "citizen" or "councillor" a term of opprobrium—they are so much superior to the stupid tradesmen who used to fill the office.'

¶ Variation in MS.:

'Nae mair down street the Council quorum waddles,
With wigs like mainsails on their logger noddles;
No difference but bulkiest or tallest,
With comfortable dulness in for ballast:
Nor shoals nor currents need a pilot's caution,
For regularly slow, they only witness motion.'

** Variation—'Wights.'

If haply Knowledge, on a random tramp,
Had shor'd them with a glimmer of his lamp, threatened
And would to Common-sense for once betray'd them,
Plain, dull Stupidity stept kindly in to aid them.*

What further clishmaclaver might been said, palaver
What bloody wars, if Sprites had blood to shed,
No man can tell; but, all before their sight,
A fairy train appear'd in order bright:
Adown the glittering stream they featly danc'd;
Bright to the moon their various dresses glanc'd:
They footed o'er the wat'ry glass so neat,
The infant ice scarce bent beneath their feet:
While arts of Minstrelsy among them rung,
And soul-ennobling Bards heroic ditties sung.

O had M'Lauchlan,† thairm-inspiring sage, catgut
Been there to hear this heavenly band engage,
When thro' his dear Strathspeys they bore with Highland rage;
Or when they struck old Scotia's melting airs,
The lover's raptur'd joys or bleeding cares;
How would his Highland lug been nobler fir'd, ear
And ev'n his matchless hand with finer touch inspired!
No guess could tell what instrument appear'd,
But all the soul of Music's self was heard;

* Variation— 'If haply Knowledge, frae a random airt,
Had shor'd them with a reckoning, or a chart,
And would to Sense's port for once betray'd them,
Plain, dull Stupidity veer'd kindly in to aid them.'

† A well-known performer of Scottish music on the violin.—*B.* 'James M'Lauchlan, a Highlander, had been once footman to Lord John Campbell at Inveraray. He came to Ayrshire in a fencible regiment, and was patronised by Hugh Montgomerie of Coilsfield (afterwards Earl of Eglintoun), who was himself both a player and a composer. Matthew Hall used to accompany M'Lauchlan over a wide extent of country, for the purpose of playing at gentlemen's houses, and even in Edinburgh and Glasgow on great occasions. In one week, to use Hall's words, they have passed twenty-six parish kirks, and returned to Ayr on Friday to a ball, never getting to bed till Saturday night.'—*Ballads and Songs of Ayrshire.*

Harmonious concert rung in every part,
While simple melody pour'd moving on the heart.

The Genius of the Stream in front appears,
A venerable Chief advanc'd in years;
His hoary head with water-lilies crown'd,
His manly leg with garter-tangle bound.
Next came the loveliest pair in all the ring,
Sweet Female Beauty hand in hand with Spring;
Then, crown'd with flow'ry hay, came Rural Joy,
And Summer, with his fervid-beaming eye:
All-cheering Plenty, with her flowing horn,
Led yellow Autumn wreath'd with nodding corn;
Then Winter's time-bleach'd locks did hoary show,
By Hospitality with cloudless brow:
Next follow'd Courage, with his martial stride,
From where the Feal wild-woody coverts hide;*
Benevolence, with mild, benignant air,
A female form, came from the tow'rs of Stair;†
Learning and Worth in equal measures trode,
From simple Catrine, their long-lov'd abode:‡
Last, white-rob'd Peace, crown'd with a hazel wreath,
To rustic Agriculture did bequeath
The broken, iron instruments of death;
At sight of whom our Sprites forgat their kindling wrath. forgot

Mary Campbell, it is inferred from the narrative of Burns himself, had proceeded, immediately after their parting, to Campbeltown, where, according to the general belief, her parents resided. She had spent the summer there; but there is no evidence that she at this time took any steps for what Burns termed 'our projected change of life,' although it is believed that she received letters from him.§ She agreed, at the recommendation of her

* We have here a compliment to Montgomerie of Coilsfield—Sodger Hugh—alluded to in the preceding note. Coilsfield, as has already been noted, is situated on the Fail (Faile or Feal), a tributary of the Ayr.

† A compliment to Mrs Stewart of Stair. See 'Epistle to Davie.'

‡ A compliment to Professor Dugald Stewart.

§ 'Miss Mary Anderson, who by her marriage became Mrs Kilgour (formerly of Ayr, Ontario, and now of Chicago), tells me that her grandmother, Mary's sister, used to sing to her children pieces of songs which Burns had written in his letters to Mary. Poor girl,

relative, Mrs Isabella Campbell, to accept a new situation for the term beginning at Martinmas, in the family of a Colonel M'Ivor in Glasgow. 'A cousin of Mary's mother'—so runs the commonly accepted story—'was married to Peter Macpherson, a ship-carpenter at Greenock. It being determined that her younger brother, Robert, should become an apprentice to Macpherson,* her father came to Greenock to make the necessary arrangements, and Mary accompanied him, professedly on her way to Glasgow for the purpose of entering on her service with Colonel M'Ivor, but secretly, perhaps, with the further design of taking a final farewell of Burns when he should depart for the West Indies; for Burns has expressly said that she crossed the sea [the Firth of Clyde] to meet him. There was what is called a *brothering-feast* at Macpherson's, on Robert Campbell being admitted to the craft, and Mary helped to wait upon the company. Next morning, the boy Robert was so indisposed as to be unable to go to his work. When Macpherson came home to breakfast, he asked what had detained him from the yard, and was told that the young man was very ill. Mary playfully remarked that he had probably taken a little too much after supper last night, and Macpherson, to keep up the badinage, said: "Oh, then, it is as well, in case of the worst, that I have agreed to purchase that *lair* in the kirk-yard;" referring to a place of sepulture which he had just secured for his family—a very important matter in Greenock, as there was then no resting-place for the remains of those who did not possess such property, except the corner assigned to strangers and paupers, or a grave obtained by favour from a friend. The young man's illness proved more serious than was at first supposed, and Mary attended him with great tenderness and assiduity. In a few days Robert began to recover, but at the same time his sister

she had none to sympathise with her, her parents did not want to hear anything of Burns; and what so natural as that she should make a *confidante* of sister Annie, the only sister she had—she a fair-haired gilpie of twelve years old? or that she should teach Annie to sing the songs which, no doubt, she sang herself? "These songs," writes Mrs Kilgour, "were never in print, although William Anderson (the Canadian emigrant and possessor of Burns's Bibles), had given some of the songs he had heard his mother sing to William Motherwell, who was collecting all he could in regard to Burns's Poems, for a work he was busy with then. But he died before it was ready to be published, so the songs were never printed." So writes my fair friend in Chicago.'—From 'Concerning Highland Mary' by Rev. William Wye Smith, in *Highland Mary*, edited by John D. Ross, 1894.

* According to another account of this incident, Robert Campbell was apprenticed to Messrs Scott, shipbuilders, Greenock.

[illegible] and became seriously ill. Her friends believed that she suffered from the ‘ill’ of an evil eye, and recommended her father to go to a cross burn—that is, a place where two burns meet—and select seven smooth stones from the channel, boil them with new milk for a certain time, and then give her the milk to drink. It must be remembered that these were Highland folk, and therefore superstitious. The drink was duly prepared, as had been recommended and given her; but her illness was soon declared to be fever, of a malignant species then prevalent in the town, and in a few days Mary Campbell died. She was buried in the lair which her relative had so recently bought, being the first of the family who was placed in it.*

Such are the particulars obtained from Macpherson's daughter, and from a male relative of the family† who often conversed on the subject with Mary's mother. The story is tolerably coherent and clear, although it points to a much longer stay on the part of Mary in Greenock than is suggested by Burns's express statement, ‘she crossed the sea to meet me at Greenock, where she had scarce landed when she was seized with a malignant fever, which hurried my dear girl to her grave in a few days, before I could hear even of her illness.’ The only point regarding which it is vague is the date of Mary's death. Near the west end of the burial-ground of the West Church, Greenock, is the little plot which had belonged to Peter Macpherson, the ship-carpenter. Shading it from the setting sun is a tall monument, erected by some admirers of Burns, and containing a sculpture representing the parting of the lovers on the banks of Ayr, surmounted by a figure weeping over an urn, on which is inscribed the name ‘Mary.’ At the foot of this monument stands the original little headstone of Macpherson. In its upper compartment are carved the tools of a carpenter, with the date 1784. Underneath, on the body of the stone, are these words: ‘This Burying-place belongs to Peter Macpherson, ship-carpenter in Greenock, and Mary Campbell his spose, and their children, 1787.’ The Register of Lairs in Greenock shows

* It is not absolutely certain where Mary Campbell died. The preponderance of opinion in Greenock is in favour of a tenement now 31 Upper Charles Street. Her mother, who died in 1824, her brothers, Archibald, who died in 1817, and Robert, who died in 1821, are buried in the Duncan Street Burying-ground. Mary Campbell's family is also represented by a grand-nephew, Mr Hugh Anderson, draper.

† Mr J. C. Douglas, clothier, Greenock.

that this portion of the burying-ground had been assigned on January 14, 1760, to Duncan Robinson, a carpenter, but on October 12, 1786, had been transferred to 'Peter Macpherson, ship-carpenter in Greenock.' It seems almost certain, therefore, that the ground which contains the ashes of Mary was bought by her relative at the very time when the Poet designed to sail from Greenock for the West Indies. Macpherson had succeeded to a stone, which he had renovated, preserving only the sculpture of his predecessor's emblems of trade, because these were equally suitable for himself. Unless, therefore, the family story is to be rejected entirely, it must be admitted that Mary's death took place in the later part of 1786. The Greenock Registers of Deaths for this period appear to have been lost. They are not deposited in the Register House, Edinburgh.

Mary's parents and other near relatives, who afterwards settled in Greenock, shrank for many years from all acknowledgment of Burns as her lover. Her father is believed to have burned the poet's letters to her, and to have forbidden his name to be mentioned. The mother was more relenting. She learned to sing the song 'The Highland Lassie' to her grandchildren. 'On being asked by her grandnephew, Mr J. C. Douglas, if she thought that Mary would have married Burns, she said that she could not tell what might have happened if Mary had survived, but she did not think her sweet lassie could have ever been happy with so wild and profane a genius as Burns—yet she would immediately add, that he was 'a real warm-hearted chield,' for such was the impression he had made upon her when he had subsequently paid her a visit. The old woman always spoke of Mary, who was the eldest of her eight children, as a paragon of gentleness and amiability. Her sincerity was a quality which, above all others, the mother dwelt on.'

Burns was at this time living in an unsettled state at Mossgiel, looking forward to the Jamaica voyage, but still hopeful that the necessity for going into exile might be obviated by his obtaining a position in the Excise. Mrs Begg used to tell how, 'after the work of the season was over, and she had, as usual, taken to the *big wheel*, in which either her mother or one of her sisters was assisting her—Robert and Gilbert being also present—a letter for the former was handed in. He went to the window to open and read

it, and she was struck by the look of agony which was the consequence. He went out without uttering a word.'*

The letter which follows, though undated, is evidently of this period. It throws a valuable light on the inner feelings of Burns at the time.

TO ROBERT AIKEN, ESQ., WRITER, AYR.

[*About 8th Oct.* 1786.]

SIR—I was with Wilson, my printer, t'other day, and settled all our by-gone matters between us. After I had paid him all demands, I made him the offer of the second edition, on the hazard of being paid out of *the first and readiest*, which he declines. By his account, the paper of a thousand copies would cost about twenty-seven pounds, and the printing about fifteen or sixteen: he offers to agree to this for the printing, if I will advance for the paper, but this, you know, is out of my power; so farewell hopes of a second edition till I grow richer! an epocha, which, I think, will arive at the payment of the British National Debt.

There is scarcely any thing hurts me so much in being disappointed of my second edition, as not having it in my power to shew my gratitude to Mr Ballantine, by publishing my poem of 'The Brigs of Ayr.' I would detest myself as a wretch, if I thought I were capable in a very long life of forgetting the honest, warm, and tender delicacy with which he enters into my interests. I am sometimes pleased with myself in my grateful sensations: but, I believe, on the whole, I have very little merit in it, as my gratitude is not a virtue, the consequence of reflection; but sheerly the instinctive emotion of a heart, too inattentive to allow worldly maxims and views to settle into selfish habits.

I have been feeling all the various rotations and movements within, respecting the Excise. There are many things plead strongly against it; the uncertainty of getting soon into business; the consequences of

* Mr John Kerr of Glasgow, in a communication to the *Scots Times* in 1827, expressed his regret that none of the letters of Burns to Highland Mary are now in existence. 'After Mary's death,' he says, 'her father disliked all allusions to her or to her lover; and when Burns wrote a moving letter, requesting some memorial of her he loved so dearly, the stern old man neither answered it, nor allowed any one to speak about it in his presence.' The Bible in two volumes, presented by Burns to Mary, remained in possession of the mother for many years, and was given by her to her only surviving daughter, Mrs Anderson. From Mrs Anderson it came to her son, William Anderson, mason in Renton, Dumbartonshire. He emigrated to Canada, carried the Bible with him, and it was there purchased by a number of gentlemen for £25, and forwarded to the provost of Ayr, to be presented in their name to the trustees of Burns's monument. This was accordingly done on the 25th of January 1841. On the next anniversary of the poet's birth, January 25, 1842, a monument, which had cost about £100, raised by subscription, was consecrated to the memory of Highland Mary, on the spot of her sepulture in the West Kirkyard of Greenock. Thus was given effect to an intention which had been declared thirty-nine years before. The minutes of the Greenock Burns Club contain this entry: '23*d Feb.* 1803.—It was unanimously decided to request permission from Mr M'Pherson to allow the Club to add a tablet to the memory of Mary Campbell on his lairs.'—See Appendix, No. VIII., 'Mary Campbell.'

my follies, which may perhaps make it impracticable for me to stay at home; and besides I have for some time been pining under secret wretchedness, from causes which you pretty well know—the pang of disappointment, the sting of pride, with some wandering stabs of remorse, which never fail to settle on my vitals like vultures, when attention is not called away by the calls of society, or the vagaries of the muse. Even in the hour of social mirth, my gaiety is the madness of an intoxicated criminal under the hands of the executioner. All these reasons urge me to go abroad, and to all these reasons I have only one answer—the feelings of a father. This, in the present mood I am in, overbalances everything that can be laid in the scale against it. . . .

You may perhaps think it an extravagant fancy, but it is a sentiment which strikes home to my very soul: though sceptical in some points of our current belief, yet, I think, I have every evidence for the reality of a life beyond the stinted bourne of our present existence; if so, then how should I, in the presence of that tremendous Being, the Author of existence, how should I meet the reproaches of those, who stand to me in the dear relation of children, whom I deserted in the smiling innocency of helpless infancy? O, thou great unknown Power! Thou Almighty God! who hast lighted up reason in my breast, and blessed me with immortality! I have frequently wandered from that order and regularity necessary for the perfection of thy works, yet thou hast never left me nor forsaken me! . . .

Since I wrote the foregoing sheet, I have seen something of the storm of mischief thickening over my folly-devoted head. Should you, my friends, my benefactors, be successful in your applications for me, perhaps it may not be in my power in that way, to reap the fruit of your friendly efforts. What I have written in the preceding pages is the settled tenor of my present resolution; but should inimical circumstances forbid me closing with your kind offer, or enjoying it only threaten to entail further misery —— . . .

To tell the truth, I have little reason for this last complaint; as the world, in general, has been kind to me fully up to my deserts. I was, for some time past, fast getting into the pining, distrustful snarl of the misanthrope. I saw myself alone, unfit for the struggle of life, shrinking at every rising cloud in the chance-directed atmosphere of fortune, while, all defenceless, I looked about in vain for a cover. It never occurred to me, at least, never with the force it deserv'd, that this world is a busy scene, and man, a creature destined for a progressive struggle; and that, however I might possess a warm heart and inoffensive manners (which last, by the bye, was rather more than I could well boast:) still, more than these passive qualities, there was something to be *done*. When all my school-fellows and youthful compeers (those misguided few excepted, who joined, to use a Gentoo phrase, the *hallachores* of the human race*)

* Burns here uses 'Gentoo' for Hindu, as in his 'Dedication to Gavin Hamilton' (see p. 373). 'Hallachore' seems to be a variant of, or misspelling for, the Hindustani *Halálcore* (Arabian and Persian, *Halalkhor*), meaning 'one who eats what is lawful.' It is applied

were striking off with eager hope and earnest intent, in some one or other of the many paths of busy life, I was 'standing idle in the market-place,' or only left the chace of the butterfly from flower to flower, to hunt fancy from whim to whim. . . .

You see, Sir, that if to *know* one's errors were a probability of *mending* them, I stand a fair chance: but, according to the reverend Westminster divines, though conviction must precede conversion, it is very far from always implying it. . . . [R. B.]

Dugald Stewart was at this time residing at his house of Catrine Bank, on the Ayr, near Mossgiel. He had been made acquainted with the works of Burns by Dr Mackenzie of Mauchline. At Stewart's request, Mackenzie came to dinner at Catrine on the 23d October, accompanied by the poet. There happened also to be present Lord Daer, son of the Earl of Selkirk, who had been a pupil of Professor Stewart. Of the meeting, Burns and Stewart have left their respective records:

EXTEMPORE VERSES ON DINING WITH LORD DAER.

This wot ye all whom it concerns,
I Rhymer Robin, alias Burns,
October twenty-third,
A ne'er to be forgotten day,
Sae far I sprachled up the brae, clambered—hill
I dinner'd wi' a Lord.

I 've been at druken writers' feasts, drunken
Nay, been bitch-fou 'mang godly priests,
Wi' reverence be it spoken;
I 've even join'd the honor'd jorum, convivial meeting
When mighty Squireships of the quorum,*
Their hydra drouth did sloken. thirst—slake

But wi' a Lord!—stand out my shin,†
A Lord—a Peer—an Earl's son,
Up higher yet, my bonnet;

euphemistically to a person of very low caste, such as a sweeper or scavenger, and probably implies that to him all food is lawful (*halal*).

* Burns here evidently alludes to the Commissioners of Supply, or some other board or committee representing the country gentlemen of Ayrshire.

† Compare Allan Ramsay's 'burnt side of your shin.'

An' sic a Lord!—lang Scotch ells twa, six feet high
Our Peerage he o'erlooks them a',
As I look o'er my sonnet.

But O for Hogarth's magic pow'r
To show Sir Bardy's willyart glow'r, bewildered gaze
An' how he star'd an' stammer'd,
When goavin, as if led wi' branks, moving stupidly—bridle
An' stumpin on his ploughman shanks, legs
He in the parlour hammer'd. moved about clumsily

I sidling shelter'd in a nook,
An' at his Lordship steal't a look
Like some portentous omen;
Except good-sense and social glee,
An' (what surprised me) modesty,
I markèd nought uncommon.

I watch'd the symptoms o' the Great,
The gentle pride, the lordly state,
The arrogant assuming;
The fient a pride, nae pride had he,*
Nor sauce, nor state, that I could see, insolence
Mair than an honest ploughman. more

Then from his Lordship I shall learn,
Henceforth to meet with unconcern
One rank as weel's another; well
Nae honest worthy man need care
To meet with noble youthful Daer,
For he but meets a brother.†

* 'Devil a bit of pride had he' is the modern slang equivalent for this line.

† Basil William Hamilton Douglas, Lord Daer, second son of the fourth Earl of Selkirk, was born in the same year as Burns. He attended classes in Edinburgh University, boarded with Dugald Stewart, and took a keen interest in philosophical and socio-political questions, contributing to the *Proceedings of the Speculative Society of Edinburgh*, of which he was a member, essays on 'The Origin and Nature of Rights,' and 'Grounds and Tendency of the Benevolent System of Philosophy.' When Burns met him, he had just returned from France, where he had cultivated the society of some of the men who afterwards figured in the Revolution (particularly Condorcet), and had contracted their sentiments. As a consequence, he became a keen advocate of parliamentary reform in this country, and regarding the interpretation of the Articles of Union, which prevented the eldest sons of

Stewart says of Burns: 'His manners were then, as they continued ever afterwards, simple, manly, and independent; strongly expressive of conscious genius and worth, but without anything that indicated forwardness, arrogance, or vanity. He took his share in conversation, but not more than belonged to him; and listened with apparent attention and deference on subjects where his want of education deprived him of the means of information. If there had been a little more of gentleness and accommodation in his temper, he would, I think, have been still more interesting; but he had been accustomed to give law in the circle of his ordinary acquaintance, and his dread of anything approaching to meanness or servility rendered his manner somewhat decided and hard. Nothing, perhaps, was more remarkable among his various attainments than the fluency, and precision, and originality of his language, when he spoke in company; more particularly as he aimed at purity in his turn of expression, and avoided, more successfully than most Scotchmen, the peculiarities of Scottish phraseology.'

TO JOHN MACKENZIE, ESQ., SURGEON,

INCLOSING THE 'EXTEMPORE VERSES ON DINING WITH LORD DAER.'

Wednesday Morning [*October* 25 (?) 1786.]

DEAR SIR—I never spent an afternoon among great folks with half that pleasure as when, in company with you, I had the honor of paying my devoirs to that plain, honest, worthy man, the Professor [Dugald Stewart]. I would be delighted to see him perform acts of kindness and friendship, though I were not the object; he does it with such a grace. I think his character, divided into ten parts, stands thus: four parts Socrates—four parts Nathaniel—and two parts Shakespeare's Brutus.

The foregoing verses were really extempore, but a little corrected since. They may entertain you a little with the help of that partiality with which you are so good as favor the performances of, Dear Sir, Your very humble Servant, R. B.

Scottish peers from sitting in parliament, to be doubtful, tried the question in the law courts, but without avail. He died in November 1794, leaving the succession to his younger brother, Thomas, fifth Earl of Selkirk, who was also a friend of Dugald Stewart, but is chiefly remembered for his emigrating large numbers of Highlanders to Canada in 1812, and so founding the Red River Settlement, now Manitoba.

In the course of his visits to Ayr, Burns had made the acquaintance of Major William Logan, a retired military officer, noted for his wit, his violin-playing, and his convivial habits, who lived a bachelor-life with his mother and an unmarried sister. Burns had visited Logan at his villa of Park, near Ayr, and had enjoyed his fiddle and his fun.* He had also been much pleased with the manners of the old lady and her daughter. On the 30th of October he is found addressing the major in an epistle expressed in merry but careless verse:

EPISTLE TO MAJOR LOGAN.

Hail, thairm-inspirin, rattlin Willie! — catgut
Tho' fortune's road be rough an' hilly
To every fiddling, rhyming billie, — fellow
We never heed,
But take it like the unback'd filly,
Proud o' her speed.

When, idly goavin, whyles we saunter; — staring stupidly—sometimes
Yirr! fancy barks, awa we canter, — off
Up hill, down brae, till some mischanter, — slope—accident
Some black bog-hole,
Arrests us, then the scathe an' banter
We 're forced to thole. — endure

Hale be your heart! hale be your fiddle! — stout
Lang may your elbuck jink and diddle, — elbow—jog

* Some of the jokes that Logan made about his own habits have become part of the literature of Scottish 'character.' Asked one day by an Ayr hostess if he would have water to the glass of spirits she brought to him, he said, with a knowing grin: 'No; I would rather ye took the water out o't.' One of his remarks was: 'It is said that persons who eat much die of apoplexy; it is also said that persons who drink much die of apoplexy. My case is different, for I both eat much and drink much: therefore I shall not die of apoplexy.' He used to talk with high relish of the days when he was a prisoner in America: 'Plenty to eat and drink, and no parades.' One of his puns was so felicitous that Thomas Hood himself might have envied it. A young officer was talking freely on religious subjects in the company of the major. He wound up with: 'In fact, I look upon the Deity merely as my superior, and myself as his vassal.' 'Yes,' quoth Logan, 'ye may well say that, for I have no doubt you pay him *feu-duties*'—*quasi dicitur*, few duties. [*Feu-duties* are in Scotland equivalent to ground-rent in England.] The poor wit, overgrown with the effects of over-indulgence, was at length the victim of painful ailments. The Rev. Mr Cuthill, one of the Ayr ministers, called to see him, and remarked that it would require fortitude to bear up under such sufferings. 'Aye,' said the dying major, 'it would take *A*fitude.'

To cheer you through the weary widdle — struggle
O' this wild warl', — world
Until you on a crummock driddle, — walking-staff—move slowly
A grey hair'd carl.*

Come wealth, come poortith, late or soon, — poverty
Heaven send your heart-strings ay in tune,
And screw your temper-pins aboon, — up
(A fifth or mair,) — more
The melancholious, lazy croon
O' cankrie care. — peevish

May still your life from day to day,
Nae 'lente largo' in the play,
But 'allegretto forte' gay,
Harmonious flow,
A sweeping, kindling, bauld strathspey— — bold
Encore! Bravo!

A blessing on the cheery gang
Wha dearly like a jig or sang,
An' never think o' right an' wrang
By square an' rule,
But, as the clegs o' feeling stang, — gadflies—sting
Are wise or fool.

My hand-waled curse keep hard in chase — chosen
The harpy, hoodock, purse-proud race, — miserly
Wha count on poortith as disgrace;
Their tuneless hearts,
May fireside discords jar a base — bass
To a' their parts! — all

But come, your hand, my careless brither, — brother
I' th' ither warl', if there 's anither, — other—another
An' that there is, I 've little swither — doubt
About the matter;
We, cheek for chow, shall jog thegither, — cheek by jowl—together
I 'se ne'er bid better. — I shall never desire

* Compare this stanza with No. 2 of the 'Second Epistle to Davie,' p. 210.

We 've faults and failings—granted clearly,
We 're frail backsliding mortals merely,
Eve's bonie squad,* priests wyte them sheerly — blame—entirely
For our grand fa'; — fall
But still, but still, I like them dearly—
God bless them a'!

Ochon for poor Castalian drinkers, — Alas—poets
When they fa' foul o' earthly jinkers! — sprightly girls
The witching, curs'd, delicious blinkers
Hae put me hyte, — Have—mad
And gart me weet my waukrife winkers, — made—wet—sleepless eyelids
Wi' girnin spite. — agonised envy

But by yon moon!—and that 's high swearin—
An' every star within my hearin!
An' by her een wha was a dear ane! — eyes—one
I 'll ne'er forget;
I hope to gie the jads a clearin, — clear up accounts with the girls
In fair play yet.

My loss I mourn, but not repent it;
I 'll seek my pursie whare I tint it; — purse—lost
Ance to the Indies I were wonted,† — Once
Some cantraip hour, — witching
By some sweet elf I 'll yet be dinted;
Then *vive l'amour!*

Faites mes baissemains respectueusè,
To sentimental sister Susie,
And honest Lucky; no to roose you, — praise
Ye may be proud,
That sic a couple fate allows ye,
To grace your blood.

Nae mair at present can I measure,
An' trowth my rhymin ware 's nae treasure; — And in truth

* The lovely daughters of Eve.

† 'Wonted' may be a reduplicated past form of the Scotch verb 'win,' signifying 'reach,' 'get.' In any case, the line means 'once I had reached the Indies.'

But when in Ayr, some half-hour's leisure,
Be 't light, be 't dark,
Sir Bard will do himself the pleasure
To call at Park.

ROBERT BURNS.

MOSSGIEL, *30th October* 1786.

Negative evidence to the unsettled condition of Burns's mind at this time, and to the uncertain character of his prospects, is supplied by the curious fact that, on the very night when he wrote these lively verses to Major Logan, there was held in Mauchline the first meeting of an association closely resembling the Tarbolton Bachelors' Club, and that he was not present at it. This was the Mauchline Conversation Society. Currie had some vague knowledge of this Society, for in his biography of the poet he says: 'After the family of our bard removed from Tarbolton to the neighbourhood of Mauchline, he and his brother were requested to assist in forming a similar institution there,' and 'though the records of the Society at Tarbolton are lost, and those of the Society at Mauchline have not been transmitted, yet we may safely affirm that our poet was a distinguished member of both these Associations, which were well calculated to excite and to develop the powers of his mind.' Currie's 'safe affirmations' are rather wide of the mark. The minute-book of the Mauchline Club has recently been discovered,* and it proves that Burns had been fully two years at Mossgiel before the Society was formed, and that he did not attend any of its meetings. This is all the more remarkable, because Gilbert Burns was a leading disputant in the Club for several years—the minute-book extends from October 30, 1786, to November 20, 1797—and the name of David Sillar heads the list of original members. As in the case of the Tarbolton Club, members were fined for non-attendances, but the fines were spent not on what Currie terms 'the enlargement of their scanty potations,' but on the purchase of books. Among the works bought were Rousseau's *Émile*, Voltaire's *Peter the Great*, Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling*, sets of *The Mirror* and *The Lounger*, and Sir John Sinclair's *Statistical Account of Scotland*. The young men of

* The contents of this book were first published in the *Kilmarnock Standard*, June 25, 1892. They also appear in *Burnsiana*, vol. ii., compiled by John D. Ross (Paisley: Alexander Gardner).

Mauchline, like their neighbours in Tarbolton, seemed to have been exercised mainly about love and marriage. Gilbert Burns, for example, raised the question in February 1790: 'Whether, in a young man's looking out for a wife, he ought to have more regard to her fortune or her personal charms?' It is evident, however, that the success of the French Revolution had its disturbing effect upon the minds of the young men of Mauchline, for on December 24, 1792, and January 21, 1793, the questions raised (in the second case by Gilbert Burns) were: 'Whether a Republican form of Government or a mixed Monarchy is the best,' or 'Whether it is probable, if a Republican form of Government were to take place, it would tend to more happiness for the present Generation?' Although the poet was not a member of the Club, and does not appear to have attended any of its meetings, some of the questions raised suggest the influence of his teaching, such as that of the opening night: 'Whether, between two friends who have entire confidence in each other, there ought to be any reserve?'

'Of all the friendships,' says Gilbert Burns, 'which Robert acquired in Ayrshire and elsewhere, none seemed more agreeable to him than that of Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop, nor any which has been more uniformly and constantly exerted in behalf of him and his family, of which, were it proper, I could give many instances. Robert was on the point of setting out for Edinburgh before Mrs Dunlop had heard of him. About the time of my brother's publishing in Kilmarnock, she had been afflicted with a long and severe illness, which had reduced her mind to the most distressing state of depression. In this situation, a copy of the printed *Poems* was laid on her table by a friend; and happening to open on "The Cotter's Saturday Night," she read it over with the greatest pleasure and surprise; the poet's description of the simple cottagers operating on her mind like the charm of a powerful exorcist, expelling the demon *ennui*, and restoring her to her wonted inward harmony and satisfaction. Mrs Dunlop sent off a person express to Mossgiel, distant fifteen or sixteen miles, with a very obliging letter to my brother, desiring him to send her half-a-dozen copies of his *Poems*, if he had them to spare, and begging he would do her the pleasure of calling at Dunlop House as soon as convenient. This was the beginning of a correspondence which ended only with the poet's life. [Nearly] the last use he made of

his pen was writing a short letter to this lady a few days before his death.' Mrs Dunlop,* as daughter of Sir Thomas Wallace of Craigie, was commonly styled a descendant of the celebrated Scottish patriot, though, in reality, her ancestor was his brother.

TO MRS DUNLOP, OF DUNLOP.

[*November* 1786.]

MADAM—I am truly sorry I was not at home yesterday, when I was so much honor'd with your order for my copies, and incomparably more by the handsome compliments you were pleased to pay to my poetic abilities. I am fully persuaded that there is not any class of mankind so feelingly alive to the titillations of applause as the sons of Parnassus: nor is it easy to conceive how the heart of the poor bard dances with rapture, when those, whose character in life gives them a right to be polite judges, honor him with their approbation. Had you been thoroughly acquainted with me, Madam, you could not have touched my darling heart-chord more sweetly than by noticing my attempts to celebrate your illustrious ancestor, the *Saviour of his Country.*

Great patriot hero! ill-requited chief!

The first book I met with in my early years, which I perused with pleasure, was *The Life of Hannibal;* the next was *The History of Sir William Wallace:* for several of my earlier years I had few other authors; and many a solitary hour have I stole out after the laborious vocations of the day, to shed a tear over their glorious, but unfortunate stories. In those boyish days I remember, in particular, being struck with that part of Wallace's story where these lines occur—

Syne to the Leglen wood, when it was late,
To make a silent and a safe retreat.

I chose a fine summer Sunday, the only day my line of life allowed, and walked half a dozen miles to pay my respects to the Leglen wood,† with as much devout enthusiasm as ever pilgrim did to Loretto; and, as I explored every den and dell where I could suppose my heroic countryman to have lodged, I recollect (for even then I was a rhymer) that my heart glowed with a wish to be able to make a song on him in some measure equal to his merits. R. B.

There is reason to believe that, early in November, Burns paid a

* Frances Anna Wallace was born April 16, 1730. In 1748 she married John Dunlop of Dunlop, and in 1760, on the death of her father, succeeded to the estate of Craigie. Being heavily encumbered, it had to be sold in 1783. The following year her husband died.

† Leglen wood is on the banks of the Ayr, near Auchencruive. It was from Mount Oliphant that Burns, as a boy, had walked to Leglen Wood.

second visit to St Margaret's Hill, probably with the intention of consulting Mr Lawrie about his future movements. In the course of conversation, allusion seems to have been made to some Ayrshire 'scandal.' The story goes that something was said which induced Mrs Lawrie, who disapproved of conversation of this kind, to make a remark that Burns took as a rebuke to himself. Before taking his leave, he had promised to send Ossian, and a collection of songs for the perusal of the young folk. He did so, accompanying the parcel with the following letter:

TO DR ARCHIBALD LAWRIE, NEWMILNS.

DEAR SIR—I have along with this sent the two volumes of Ossian, with the remaining volume of the Songs. Ossian I am not in such a hurry about; but I wish the Songs, with the volume of the Scotch poets, returned as soon as they can conveniently be despatched. If they are left at Mr Wilson, the Bookseller's shop, Kilmarnock, they will easily reach me.

My most respectful compliments to Mr and Mrs Lawrie; and a poet's warmest wishes for their happiness to the young ladies; particularly the fair musician, whom I think much better qualified than ever David was, or could be, to charm an evil spirit out of a Saul.

Indeed, it needs not the feelings of a poet to be interested in the welfare of one of the sweetest scenes of domestic peace and kindred love that ever I saw; as I think the peaceful unity of St Margaret's Hill can only be excelled by the harmonious concord of the Apocalyptic Zion. I am, dear Sir, yours sincerely, ROBT. BURNS.

MOSSGIEL, 13*th Nov.* 1786.

When the books were opened, a slip of paper dropped out of one of the volumes. It contained the following expostulation in regard to the remarks which had been made by Mrs Lawrie:

Rusticity's ungainly form
  May cloud the highest mind;
But when the heart is nobly warm,
  The *good* excuse will find.

Propriety's cold, cautious rules
  Warm fervour may o'erlook;
But spare poor sensibility
  Th' ungentle, harsh rebuke.

By this time Burns must have been aware of an important cir-

cumstance—the first mention of his name in a journal of criticism. At that period the venerable *Scots Magazine* had a youthful rival in the *Edinburgh Magazine or Literary Miscellany*, published by James Sibbald, a bookseller of literary taste. The number for October (published, as was then the custom, at the beginning of the month following that for which it was designated) contains a critique on *Poems, chiefly in the Scottish dialect, by Robert Burns, Kilmarnock.** The article speaks of 'the author' as 'a striking example of native genius bursting through the obscurity of poverty and the obstructions of a laborious life.' 'To those,' the critic goes on to say, 'who admire the creations of untutored fancy, and are blind to many faults for the sake of numberless beauties, his poems will yield singular gratification. His observations on human character are acute and sagacious, and his descriptions are lively and just. Of rustic pleasantry he has a rich fund, and some of his softer scenes are touched with inimitable delicacy. . . . The character Horace gives to Osellus is particularly applicable to him:

Rusticus abnormis sapiens, crassaque Minerva.'†

Copious extracts are added in justification of the critic's opinion. Issued on 3d November, *The Edinburgh Magazine* thus forestalled by five weeks the famous review by Henry Mackenzie in *The Lounger*. To Sibbald, therefore, belongs the honour of having been the first to publicly review the *Poems*. To use a modern phrase, he 'discovered' Burns. When we follow the poet to Edinburgh, we shall find him (in a letter written sometime in January 1787) sending profuse thanks to Sibbald for having befriended him—'an obscure man and young author.'

The precise period when Burns abandoned his resolution to go to the West Indies, and determined to try his fortune in Edinburgh, cannot be ascertained. It does not appear to have been before the date of his 'Epistle to Major Logan'—30th October. It was, however, before the 18th of November, for on that day he forwarded 'Tam Samson' to Robert Muir of Kilmarnock.

* In the *Edinburgh Advertiser* of November 3, the *Edinburgh Magazine* for October is advertised as 'published this day,' with the following addition to the usual description of the contents: 'In this number are given ample extracts from the Poems of R. BURNS, a ploughman in Ayrshire.'

† Horace, *Satires*, Book II., No. 2, lines 2, 3. Ofella, not Osellus, is the person whose 'character' is applied to Burns.

TO MR ROBT. MUIR.

MOSSGIEL, 18th *Nov.* 1786.

MY DEAR SIR—Inclosed you have 'Tam Samson' as I intend to print him. I am thinking for my Edinburgh expedition on Monday or Tuesday come se'ennight, for pos. I will see you on Tuesday first. I am ever, your much indebted, ROBT. BURNS.

John Ballantine of Ayr was also concerned in the forming of this resolution. According to the report of Gilbert Burns, indeed, when it came to Ballantine's knowledge that the poet was prevented from printing a second edition by want of money to pay for the paper, he 'generously offered to accommodate Robert with what money he might need for that purpose [£27], but advised him to go to Edinburgh, as the fittest place for publishing.'

It was at this crisis, and with a view to the proposed second edition, that Burns addressed a letter to Miss Alexander of Ballochmyle, enclosing his song in her honour, and asking her permission to print it:

TO MISS WILHELMINA ALEXANDER,

INCLOSING A SONG I HAD COMPOSED ON HER.

[MOSSGIEL, 18th *Nov.* 1786.]

MADAM—Poets are such outré beings, so much the children of wayward fancy and capricious whim, that I believe the world generally allows them a larger latitude in the rules of propriety, than the sober sons of judgement and prudence. I mention this as an apology for the liberties that a nameless stranger has taken with you in the inclosed, which he begs leave to present you with. Whether it has poetical merit any way worthy of the theme, I am not the proper judge: but it is the best my abilities can produce; and what to a good heart will perhaps be a superiour grace, it is equally sincere [as fervent].

The scenery was nearly taken from real life, though I dare say, Madam, you do not recollect it, as I believe you scarcely noticed the Poetic *Rêveur* as he wandered by you. I had roved out as chance directed, in the favorite haunts of my muse, the banks of Ayr, to view nature in all the gayety of the vernal year. The evening sun was flaming o'er the distant, western hills; not a breath stirred the crimson opening blossom, or the verdant spreading leaf. 'Twas a golden moment for a poetic heart. I listened [to] the feathered warblers, pouring their harmony on every hand, with a congenial kindred regard; and frequently turned out of my path lest I should disturb their little songs, or frighten them to another station. 'Surely,' said I to myself, 'he must

be a wretch indeed, who, regardless of your harmonious endeavour to please him, can eye your elusive flights to discover your secret recesses, and rob you of all the property nature gives you, your dearest comforts, your helpless nestlings.' Even the hoary hawthorn twig that shot across the way, what heart at such a time but must have been interested in its welfare, and wished it to be preserved from the rudely browsing cattle, or the withering eastern blast? Such was the scene—and such the hour, when, in a corner of my prospect, I spied one of the fairest pieces of nature's workmanship that ever crowned a poetic landscape, [or blest a poet's eye,] those visionary bards excepted, who hold commerce with aërial beings! Had Calumny and Villainy taken my walk, they had at that moment sworn eternal peace with such an object.

What an hour of inspiration for a Poet! It would have raised plain dull historic Prose to metaphor and measure.

The inclosed song was the work of my return home; and perhaps it but poorly answers what might have been expected from such a scene. I am going to print a second edition of my Poems, but cannot insert these verses without your permission. I have the honor to be, Madam, your most obedient and very humble servt, [ROBT. BURNS].

This letter the poet copied into the Glenriddel volume of his letters, and appended to it this note:

Well, Mr Burns, and *did* the lady give you the desired permission? No! She was too fine a Lady *to notice* so plain a compliment. As to her great brothers, whom I have since met in life on more equal terms of respectability—why should I quarrel their want of attention to me? When Fate swore that their purses should be full, Nature was equally positive that their heads should be empty. 'Men of their fashion were surely incapable of being unpolite?' Ye canna mak a silk-purse o' a sow's lug.

The apology subsequently presented by the family for Miss Alexander's silence, so bitterly resented by Burns, was that, on inquiring about the person who had addressed her, an unfavourable opinion of his character was given to her. 'Feeling it to be necessary to decline yielding to his request, she thought that her decision would be intimated most delicately to him by allowing his letter to remain unanswered.'*

* Miss Alexander and her relatives learned afterwards, however, to think that the woods of Ballochmyle had been rendered classic, and herself immortal by the genius of Burns. On a question occurring, many years after, as to the disposal of the original manuscript of the song, Miss Alexander said that there could be no dispute on that point: wherever she went, it must go. The late Mr Alexander, her nephew, erected a rustic seat on the spot where she is believed to have met Burns, and above it was hung a framed *fac-simile* of the song and letter. Wilhelmina Alexander died unmarried in 1843, in Glasgow, at the age of eighty-eight.

Two days after writing to Miss Alexander, having occasion to transmit a copy of a comic ballad, intended for private perusal only, to two friends in Ayr, he enclosed it in a sheet penned in the style of a public writ:

IN THE NAME OF THE NINE, AMEN.

WE, Robert Burns, by virtue of a Warrant from Nature, bearing date the Twenty-fifth day of January, Anno Domini one thousand seven hundred and fifty-nine, Poet-Laureat, and Bard in Chief, in and over the Districts and Countries of Kyle, Cunningham and Carrick, of old extent, To our trusty and well-beloved William Chalmers and John M'Adam, Students and Practitioners in the ancient and mysterious Science of Confounding Right and Wrong.

RIGHT TRUSTY—Be it known unto you that whereas in the course of our care and watchings over the Order and Police of all and sundry the Manufacturers, Retainers, and Venders of Poesy; Bards, Poets, Poetasters, Rhymers, Jinglers, Songsters, Ballad-singers, &c., &c., &c., &c., &c., male and female—We have discovered a certain . . . nefarious, abominable and wicked Song or Ballad, a copy whereof We have inclosed; Our Will therefore is, that Ye pitch upon and appoint the most execrable Individual of that most execrable Species, known by the appellation, phrase, and nickname of 'The Deil's Yell Nowte:'* and after having caused him to kindle a fire at the Cross of Ayr, ye shall, at noontide of the day, put into the said wretch's merciless hands the said copy of the said nefarious and wicked Song, to be consumed by fire in the presence of all Beholders, in abhorrence of, and terrorem to, all such Compositions and Composers. And this in nowise ye leave undone, but have it executed in every point as this Our Mandate bears, before the twenty-fourth current, when in person We hope to applaud your faithfulness and zeal.

Given at Mauchline this twentieth day of November, Anno Domini one thousand seven hundred and eighty-six.

GOD SAVE THE BARD.

On the same day he wrote the following letter to his friend Ballantine:

TO JOHN BALLANTINE, ESQ., AYR,†

ENCLOSING THE POEM, 'A WINTER NIGHT.'

SIR,—Enclosed you have my first attempt in that irregular kind of measure in which many of our finest Odes are wrote. How far I have

* Gilbert Burns says that 'the deil's yell nowte' (literally, 'the devil's barren cattle') were 'sheriff-officers;' Currie, that they were 'old bachelors.'

† Mr William Scott Douglas explains (Library Edition of the *Works of Robert Burns*, 1878), that the late Dr Robert Carruthers of Inverness obtained this letter 'from his much

succeeded, I don't know, but I shall be happy to have your opinion on Friday first (24th Nov.) when I intend being in Ayr.

I hear of no returns from Edinburgh to Mr Aiken respecting my second edition business, so I am thinking to set out beginning of next week for the City myself. If my first poetic patron, Mr Aiken, is in town, I want to get his advice, both in my procedure and some little criticism affairs much, if business will permit you to honour me with a few minutes when I come down on Friday.—I have the honour to be, Sir, your much indebted humble Servt. ROBERT BURNS.

MOSSGIEL, 20th *Nov.* 1786.

We obtain some further insight into the prospects of Burns from a second letter of Dr Blacklock to Mr Lawrie, written on the 27th of November. 'Some time ago,' says the blind poet, 'I took the freedom of troubling you with a letter, acknowledging the favour of Mr Burns's Poems; but at that time my mind was so full of their merit, that it entirely escaped my memory to inquire how much I was indebted for it; nor was this all, for instead of sending the letter by any of the channels to which I was directed, it was conveyed by the post, as I did not know where to find them' [the aforesaid channels].* [Before Saturday last] 'a report had reached me that a second edition of the Poems was projected, consisting, according to some, of twelve, or, according to others, of five thousand copies, at the expense of the gentlemen of Ayrshire, for the author's benefit.' Dr Blacklock feels disposed to remonstrate with the Ayrshire gentlemen for proposing so large an edition, as it might too long postpone another with additions; but he would fain offer them at the same time his 'warmest acknowledgments for the generous concern which they discovered in favour of poetical merit, and for that exquisite taste by which it has been so warmly and justly distinguished. It has also been suggested to me,' he adds, 'that my former [letter] to you was intended for publication [prefixed to the new edition]. I have not the least recollection of what was said in that letter. It was an

lamented deceased friend, Colonel Francis Cunningham (youngest son of the famous Allan), who, shortly before his death in 1875, had copied it from a lady's album in Boulogne-sur-Mer, in which the precious holograph was enshrined.' Mr Scott Douglas adds: 'The poem referred to did not accompany the letter.' 'A Winter Night,' in its revised form, was included in the Edinburgh edition of 1787, and will, therefore, appear in the second volume of this work.

* This is a curious trait of the past. The postage of the letter of 4th September was fourpence; and the writer deems it necessary to apologise for not sending it by some private hand or a carrier.

unpremeditated effusion of pleasure and gratitude. So far, however, as I remember, there occurs to me no reason for retracting anything which it contained; yet you must grant me that it is one thing to talk to a friend, and quite another to address the public. I must therefore, if the letter is really designed to be printed, earnestly solicit you to review it, and to erase or correct anything which may appear to be careless, bombastic, or hyperbolical.'

It had been thought of some consequence by Mr Lawrie that the Poems should be shown by Blacklock to Dr Blair, who might be considered as the highest tribunal of criticism then in Scotland. Dr Blacklock now tells his country friend: '*A priori*, I will venture to assure you that most, if not all, of the Scots poems will fail of gaining his approbation. His taste is too highly polished, and his genius too regular in its emotions to make allowances for the sallies of a more impetuous ardour. Nor can he enter into the sentiment of Mr Pope—

> Authors, 'tis true, may gloriously offend,
> And faults commit true critics dare not mend.
> From common rules with brave disorder part,
> And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art.'

It is a remarkable indication of the eagerness with which the Kilmarnock volume was received, that no copy could be spared for the poet's own family at Mossgiel. Burns had always been free in communicating his compositions to his mother and sisters. They now heard reports of his spreading fame without surprise, for they had long ago learned to regard him, with pride and pleasure, as an extraordinary genius. Yet it is understood that it was not till the Edinburgh edition was published in 1787 that they possessed his collected poems in print. They urged him to try his fortune in the capital. Gilbert, in particular, warmly favoured this step, and did all in his power to smooth the way for the journey.

APPENDICES.

No. I.—BURNS'S ANCESTRY.

BURNS, as stated briefly in the text, was descended, through both father and mother, from small farmers. On the father's side, the family can be traced back through four generations of Kincardineshire yeomen, and there were tenant-farmers of his name on the estate of Inchbreck in that county in the middle of the sixteenth century. At the top of the poet's authentic genealogical tree stands the name of Walter Burnes, of whom nothing is known but that he died in depressed circumstances in the parish of Glenbervie, in the Mearns, before the middle of the seventeenth century. An air of mystery has been thrown round Walter Burnes by a tradition, which lingered on into the present century, that his real name was Campbell, and that he was a refugee from Argyllshire. It was thus stated by John Burness (author of 'Thrummy Cap'), a relative of the poet's, in a letter of date 1824, as having been communicated to him, thirty years before, by the Rev. Alexander Greig, Episcopal minister in Stonehaven, who was connected by marriage with the Burnes family, and died in 1793, at the age of 86: 'Walter Campbell, proprietor of a small domain in Argyllshire, named Burn-house, took part with James the Second at the Revolution, by which means he incurred the displeasure of the Duke (*sic*), and the whole family (who espoused the side of King William) was, much about the time of the noted massacre of Glencoe, obliged to abandon his native country, and to wander to the Lowlands as a fugitive, accompanied by his only son, Walter, then a boy; he dropped the name of Campbell, and was known by that of Burness, probably a corruption of Burn-house, the place of his birth.' * This story does not bear examination. Walter

* A later and prettier version of this story is given in *The Evergreen* (Spring, 1895, Edinburgh, Patrick Geddes and colleagues) by Mr Alexander Carmichael, in an article on 'The Land of Lorne.' According to Mr Carmichael, Walter Campbell, son of Campbell of Bailendeor in Lorne, who was hereditary almoner to the Abbey of Airdchattan, killed about the middle of the seventeenth century a band of poets, known as the 'Strolling

Burnes (there is no authority for the Burness spelling so early) and his son Walter (d. 1670) were dead long before the massacre of Glencoe (1692). It is of course possible that the author of 'Thrummy Cap' confused the Civil War with the Revolution; if so, chronology at least does not prevent the acceptance of the story. A Walter Campbell, driven from Argyllshire between 1638 and 1660, might have settled in Kincardineshire, changed his name, and have had a son who died in 1670, and a grandson born in 1655. But the tradition cannot be verified, and it lies under suspicion as an attempt to account for the origin of a name in a certain district a century after its first recorded occurrence there.* Besides the statement of Professor Stuart of Aberdeen (who was in the beginning of this century proprietor of the estate of Inchbreck, Glenbervie, on which several descendants of Walter Burnes held farms) that in 1547 lands on the estate were rented by persons named Burnes, we have the testimony of the parish register of Arbuthnot, in which, from 1635 onwards, numerous entries occur of Burnaces and Burneces. And the name of John Burnes, servitor to Sir Alexander Strachan of Thornton, knight-baronet, appears as witness to a disposition granted in 1637 by the Earl of Traquair, Treasurer of Scotland, in the name of the Scottish Exchequer: Thornton is close to Inchbreck. The genealogy of Burns on the father's side runs as follows:

(I.) Walter Burnes, who died in depressed circumstances in the parish of Glenbervie, in Kincardineshire. His son,

(II.) Walter Burnes, being left in indigent circumstances, learned a trade, and, living industriously and frugally, saved a little money, by which he was enabled to take the farm of Bogjorgan, in Glenbervie parish, where he lived till his death in 1670. The farm was on the estate of Inchbreck. It extended to 60 acres, Scots measure. He had a son, William, who succeeded him in his farm, and who died, probably in 1715. Walter had three other sons, two of whom settled in the parish of Benholm. In Walter's will his name is spelt (by a clerk) Burnece.

Connected with William's tenancy of Bogjorgan, a document has

Satirists.' Campbell was forced, in consequence, to flee from his native district. 'He crossed the river Awe at the Brander, where Macdougall and Bruce had fought a battle, and continued his course up Glenorchy and down Glenlyon among friendly clansmen, and possibly kinsmen, and after many weary wanderings to and fro, settled down in Kincardine. Bailendeor is in the near neighbourhood of Taynuilt-Bunawe. Taynuilt means burnhouse, from *taigh*, house, and *uillt*, oblique form of *allt*, a burn, stream. Whether Walter Campbell himself ever divulged his real name in Kincardine is not known. But being from Burnhouse, he became known among his neighbours in Kincardine, as "Walter Burnhoose," shrivelling down through the years to "Burness," and in his great-great-grandson into Burns.' The practice of calling a man after his occupation, or the place where he lives or whence he came, is common throughout Scotland. Walter Campbell of Bailendeor in Lorne thus became Walter Burness of Bogjoram in Kincardine, and great-great-grandfather of Robert Burness, afterwards 'Burns.' It has often been remarked that the genius of Burns was Celtic, not Saxon. And this shrewd observation was made by those who were ignorant of the historical fact.

* A curious fact connected with this subject is the mention by Horace Walpole of a correspondence carried on in 1742 by John, Duke of Argyll, with the head of the House of Stuart, under the pseudonym of *Burnus* (so Walpole spells it).

lately been discovered, which gives a very exact description of the accommodations required for a Scottish farmer at the beginning of the eighteenth century:

Ane note of the biging off Bogjorgine Belonging to William Stuart heritor thereoff given up be William Burnasse present tenant of the sd. Rowm and James Burnesse late possessore of the halff thereoff upon the seventainth day of Jully 1705 years

Imp [a ffyr] houss consisting off thrie couplles ffour horses two taill postes ane midle wall with ane post ffrom the ground with ane rooff two pares in the syd with ane door bandet locked and bared and with ane window off two lightes bradet bandet and snecked with ane loume all to be sufficient

Item ane barne consisting of ffyve couplles four horses two taill postes ane Rooff thrie pares in the syd with ffor door locked and bandet and back door bared and steepled all to be sufficient

Item ane byre consisting of four couplles two in the syd ane rooff with door and door cheikes bandet all to be sufficient

It is declared be both parties that if ther be no other inventur ffound betwixt this and Whytsonday nixt 1706 yeares that this shall be ane tr[ue] inventur off the said William Burness at his removell from the said Roum In witnes . . . . . beffor these witnesses Robt. Middletoun in Broombank and David Watson in Polburn wryter hereoff

Will. Stuart

R. Midletone witnes
D. Watson wittnes and wrytr

1705

W B

(III.) James Burnes (b. 1655), another son of Walter (called Birness in the Fordoun Presbytery records, 1727), became tenant first of Hawkhill, and afterwards of Bralinmuir, Inchbreck, at a rent of £300 sterling; his descendants continued to occupy the latter farm till after the beginning of the present century. He died in 1743, at the age of eighty-seven. In the time when James Burnes lived, the Highlanders still kept up their old habit of making predatory incursions into the Mearns. 'On one occasion,' it is recorded, 'when some *catterans*, as they were called, made an approach to Bralinmuir, the goodman adopted the expedient of hiding his loose cash in the nave of an old cart wheel, which usually lay in the *jaw-hole* before the door, to perform duty as a sort of stepping-stone. Both ends of the aperture being plugged up, and the wheel laid down, as usual, in the puddle, the catterans stepped upon it in entering the house, without the faintest suspicion of what they were treading upon.' By Margaret Falconer, James Burnes had five sons, four of whom he set up in farms. His will, in which these children are named, is the document which established beyond doubt the poet's lineage as here recorded. It was discovered, under date 28th January 1743, in the Stonehaven Sheriff Court-books, by the late John Craig Thomson, Sheriff-clerk depute there. He left 500 merks among his children. One of them, named James, his successor in the farm, was well remembered in the country. In advanced life, he married for his second wife a girl so young and inexperienced that she could not spin or

reel, and her husband had to teach her. As he had a hesitation in his speech, the words he used on this occasion appeared the more ridiculous to his neighbours, and they were long afterwards cited by old people. James Birness in Bralans-muire appeared before the Presbytery of Fordoun in 1727, as one of 'two honest men,' to testify to a third man's statement. A Christian Birness also appeared in the case. The eldest son of the first James,

(IV.) Robert Burnes rented first the farm of Kinmonth. In 1721, the year when his third son, William, father of the poet, was born, he removed to the farm of Clochnahill, of a very poor soil, on the lands of Dunottar, the estate of the Earl Marischal, who was attainted in 1716 for his concern in the rising of 1715. It is about six miles west of Stonehaven, on the Laurencekirk road. He married Isabella, daughter of Alexander Keith, of Criggie, a tenant on the Marischal estates, and they had ten children. The rent of Clochnahill was £10, 8s. 4d. sterling, with kain of two reek hens. The third son of Robert Burnes,

(V.) William Burnes, migrated to Ayrshire, where he died in 1784. He was the father of

(VI.) ROBERT BURNS, the SCOTTISH POET.

On the mother's side, also, Burns came of a tenant-farmer stock. His mother, Agnes Brown, or Broun, was the daughter of Gilbert Broun, farmer in Craigenton, or Craiginton, Kirkoswald. There were Brouns in Ayrshire from the time of Bruce. In that king's reign, a Robert Broun forfeited the lands of Auchindrane, in Ayrshire, and an Adie Broun forfeited a portion of land in the sheriffdom of Ayr. Brouns were burgesses of Ayr in the fifteenth century, and from that time onwards were found in the burgh as traders, litsters, &c. The family spread to neighbouring parishes. For being concerned in the rising at Bothwell, two Cumnock Brouns were, at an Ayr assize, in June 1683, sentenced to decapitation, but the sentence was remitted. Of this Cumnock branch was John Broun, the 'Christian Carrier,' a Presbyterian and Covenanter, who was shot, by Claverhouse's orders, in the presence of his wife and family, on the 1st May 1685. Burns's mother traced her descent from John Broun, farmer at Craigenton, in the end of the seventeenth century. He married, on 24th December 1675, Jennet M'Gren * (M'Grean or M'Graen), also of Kirkoswald, and died at Littletoun, in the same parish, in 1724. Their son Gilbert (b. 1708) became lessee of Craigenton, which is a farm of 160 imperial acres. He married, on 7th May 1731, Agnes Rennie. She was a daughter of William Rennie (or Rainy), 'baker in Air,' and Jean Ramsay, 'servitour to Agnes Boswall, widow in Air,' who some time after their marriage settled in Maybole, where it is believed Agnes was born. Gilbert Broun and Agnes Rennie had four sons and two daughters.

* Local tradition associates 'Rab M'Graen,' in 'Halloween,' with this family, as it does 'Uncle Johnnie' with one of Burns's friends, the Nivens; 'Hav'rel Will' with a lad of the name of Sloan, who is said to have occasionally acted as 'gaudsman' at Mossgiel; 'Tam Kipples' with William Cupples, son of the minister of Kirkoswald; and even 'Fardencalla' in that parish with 'Achmacalla.' Little or no value attaches to conjectures of this kind.

Agnes, the poet's mother, was the eldest, having been born on 17th March 1732. She was thus only ten at her mother's death in 1742. When the mother's death was looked for, a sister came to see her, and was surprised to find how cheerful she was. 'Are you not sorry to leave your husband and children?' asked the sister. 'No,' was the answer; 'I leave my children to the care of God, and Gilbert will soon get another wife.' The father, being of ultra-frugal habits, kept all his servants engaged in the farm and house work; so that the charge of the children fell to the care of the eldest, herself a mere child, but no doubt forced into a premature thoughtfulness by the extraordinary circumstances.

Agnes had been taught to read her Bible, and repeat the Psalms, by a weaver in the village, who kept such young pupils beside his loom as he sat at work. At her mother's death, this kind of education came to a stop, and it was never resumed. The mother of Burns was never able even to write her own name. Her mind was shrewd and intelligent, but unavoidably warped with prejudices, though not to a serious extent.

After her father's second marriage, in 1744—he was married three times—Agnes Brown was sent to live with her mother's mother, Mrs Rennie, who in her younger days had associated with the persecuted Covenanters, and afterwards with her uncle, William Broun, then a widower, the blind old man who, as Burns told Mrs Dunlop, used to find his highest enjoyment in crying while Agnes sang the simple old song of 'The Life and Age of Man.' When Mrs Rennie was more than ordinarily pleased with her granddaughter's doings at the wheel, she gave her, as her *ten hours* or lunch, a piece of brown bread, with a piece of white as *kitchen* to it, both being only varieties of oatmeal-cake.

While living with her grandmother, Agnes occasionally acted as *gaudsman* or horse-driver to the ploughman, William Nelson, and assisted him to thrash the corn with the flail. They became attached, and were engaged for seven years, when, at the mature age of twenty-six, she gave him up, in consequence of a moral lapse on his part of the kind most apt to alienate the affections of a pure-minded woman. Soon after, William Burnes happened to meet her at a Maybole fair. He had been well affected to a girl he used to meet frequently at Alloway Mill, and had kept a letter addressed to her for some time locked up in his trunk. He was now so much pleased with Agnes that, immediately on returning home, he took the epistle from his trunk and burnt it. After he had been Agnes's devoted admirer for a twelvemonth, they were married.

Mrs Burnes had a fine complexion, with pale red hair, and beautiful dark eyes. She was of a neat small figure, extremely active and industrious—naturally cheerful, but in later life possessed by anxieties, no doubt a consequence of the life of hardships and difficulties through which it had been her lot to pass. She sang very well, and had a never-failing store of old ballads and songs, on which her son must have fed in his boyhood. As a trait of the life of Mrs Burnes in the days of sadness which preceded her husband's death, Mrs Begg remembered the old man coming in one day from sowing, very weary. 'He had used all

the thrashed-up grain, and was now desirous of preparing some for a feed to the horses; but his worthy helpmate, on seeing his fatigued state, insisted that he should refresh himself by a rest, while she herself would see that the beasts were duly cared for. She then went to the barn with her servant, Lizzy Paton, and the two soon had the necessary corn for the horses both thrashed and winnowed.' Agnes Burnes continued to reside with her son Gilbert till her decease in 1820, in her 88th year, and in the 36th year of her widowhood.

No. II.—RELIGIOUS AND THEOLOGICAL WRITINGS WHICH INFLUENCED BURNS.

A MANUAL OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF, IN A DIALOGUE BETWEEN FATHER AND SON, compiled by William Burnes, farmer at Mount Oliphant, Ayrshire, and transcribed, with grammatical corrections, by John Murdoch, teacher.

Son. Dear father, you have often told me, while you were initiating me into the Christian Religion, that you stood bound for me, to give me a Christian education, and recommended a religious life to me. I would, therefore, if you please, ask you a few questions, that may tend to confirm my faith, and clear its evidences to me.

Father. My dear child, with gladness I will resolve to you (so far as I am able) any question you shall ask; only with this caution, that you will believe my answers, if they are founded in the Word of God.

Question. How shall I evidence to myself that there is a God?

Answer. By the works of creation: for nothing can make itself; and this fabrick of nature demonstrates its Creator to be possessed of all possible perfection, and for that cause we owe all that we have to Him.

Question. If God be possessed of all possible perfection, ought not we then to love Him, as well as to fear and serve Him?

Answer. Yes; we ought to serve Him out of love, for his perfections give us delightful prospects of his favour and friendship, for if we serve Him out of love, we will endeavour to be like Him, and God will love His own image, and if God love us, he will rejoice over us to do us good.

Question. Then one would think this were sufficient to determine all men to love God; but how shall we account for so much wickedness in the world?

Answer. God's Revealed Word teaches us that our first parents brake His covenant, and deprived us of the influences of His Grace that were to be expected in that state, and introduced Sin into the world; and the Devil, that great enemy of God and man, laying hold on this instrument, his kingdom has made great progress in the world.

Question. But has God left His own rational offspring thus, to the tyranny of His and their enemy?

Answer. No; for God hath addressed His rational creatures, by telling

them in His Revealed Word, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the Serpent, or Devil, or in time destroy his kingdom; and in the meantime, every one oppressed by the tyranny of the Devil should, through the promised seed, by faith in Him, and humble supplication, and a strenuous use of their own faculties, receive such measures of Grace, in and through this method of God's conveyance, as should make them able to overcome.

Question. But by what shall I know that this is a revelation of God, and not a cunningly devised fable?

Answer. A revelation of God must have these four marks: (1) It must be worthy of God to reveal; (2) It must answer all the necessities of human nature; (3) It must be sufficiently attested by miracles; and (4) It is known by prophecies and their fulfilment. That it is worthy of God it is plain, by its addressing itself to the reason of men, and plainly laying before them the dangers to which they are liable, with motives and arguments to persuade them to their duty, and promising such rewards as are fitted to promote the happiness of a rational soul. Secondly, it provides for the guilt of human nature, making an atonement by a mediator; and for its weakness, by promising the assistance of God's Spirit; and for its happiness, by promising a composure of mind, by the regulation of its faculties, and reducing the appetites and passions of the body unto the subjection of reason, enlightened by the Word of God, and by a resurrection of the body, and a glorification of both soul and body in heaven, and that to last through an eternity. Thirdly, as a miracle is a contradiction of the known laws of Nature, demonstrating that the worker has the power of Nature in his hands, and, consequently, must be God, or sent by His commission and authority from Him to do such and such things. That this is the case in our Scriptures is evident both by the prophets, under the Old, and our Saviour, under the New Testament. Whenever it served for the glory of God, or for the confirmation of their commissions, all Nature was obedient to them; the elements were at their command, also, the sun and moon, yea, Life and Death. Fourthly, that prophecies were fulfilled at the distance of many hundreds of years, is evident by comparing the following texts of Scripture:—Gen. xlix. 10, 11; Matth. xxi. 5; Isa. vii. 14; Matth. i. 22, 23; Luke i. 34; Isa. xl. 1; Matth. iii. 3; Mark i. 3; Luke iii. 4; John i. 23; Isa. xlii. 1, 2, 3, 4. A description of the character of Messiah in the Old Testament Scriptures is fulfilled in all the Evangelists. In Isa. l. 5, His sufferings are prophesied, and exactly fulfilled in the New Testament, Matth. xxvi. 67, and xxvii. 26; and many others, as that Abraham's seed should be strangers in a strange land four hundred years, and being brought to Canaan, and its accomplishment in the days of Joseph, Moses, and Joshua.

Question. Seeing that the Scriptures are proven to be a revelation of God to His creatures, am I not indispensably bound to believe and obey them?

Answer. Yes.

Question. Am I equally bound to obey all the laws delivered to Moses upon Mount Sinai?

Answer. No; the laws delivered to Moses are of three kinds; first, the Moral Law, which is of eternal and indispensable obligation on all ages and nations; secondly, the law of Sacrifices and ordinances were only Ordinances in which were couched types and shadows of things to come, and when that dispensation was at an end, this law ended with them, for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness; thirdly, laws that respected the Jewish commonwealth can neither be binding on us, who are not of that commonwealth, nor on the Jews, because their commonwealth is at an end.

Question. If the Moral Law be of indispensable obligation, I become bound to perfect and perpetual obedience, of which I am incapable, and on that account cannot hope to be justified and accepted with God?

Answer. The Moral Law, as a rule of life, must be of indispensable obligation, but it is the glory of the Christian religion, that if we be upright in our endeavours to follow it, and sincere in our repentance, upon our failing or shortcoming, we shall be accepted according to what we have, and shall increase in our strength, by the assistance of the Spirit of God co-operating with our honest endeavours.

Question. Seeing the assistance of the Spirit of God is absolutely necessary for salvation, hath not God clearly revealed by what means we may obtain this great blessing?

Answer. Yes: the Scriptures tell us that the Spirit of God is the purchase of Christ's mediatorial office: and through faith in Him, and our humble prayers to God through Christ, we shall receive such measures thereof as shall answer all our wants.

Question. What do you understand by faith?

Answer. Faith is a firm persuasion of the Divine mission of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that He is made unto us of God, wisdom, righteousness, and complete redemption; or as He is represented to us under the notion of a root, and we the branches, deriving all from Him; or as the head, and we the members of His body; intimating to us that this is the way or channel through which God conveys His blessings to us, and we are not to expect them but in God's own way. It is therefore a matter of consequence to us, and therefore we ought with diligence to search the Scriptures, and the extent of His commission, or what they declare Him to be, and to receive Him accordingly, and to acquiesce in God's plan of our salvation.

Question. By what shall I know that Jesus Christ is really the person that was prophecied of in the Old Testament; or that He was that seed of woman that was to destroy the Kingdom of Sin?

Answer. Besides the Scriptures forecited, which fully prove him to be that blessed person, Christ did many miracles: he healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, made the lame to walk, raised the dead, and fed thousands with a few loaves, &c. He foretold His own death and resurrection, and the wonderful progress of His religion, in spite of all

the power of the Roman Empire—and that by means of his disciples, a few poor illiterate fishermen.

Question. You speak of repentance as absolutely necessary to salvation —I would know what you mean by repentance?

Answer. I not only mean a sorrowing for sin, but a labouring to see the malignant nature of it; as setting nature at variance with herself, by placing the animal part before the rational, and thereby putting ourselves on a level with the brute beasts, the consequence of which will be an intestine war in the human frame, until the rational part be entirely weakened, which is spiritual death, which in the nature of the thing renders us unfit for the society of God's spiritual kingdom, and to see the beauty of holiness. On the contrary, setting the rational part above the animal, though it promote a war in the human frame, every conflict and victory affords us grateful reflection, and tends to compose the mind more and more, not to the utter destruction of the animal part, but to the real and true enjoyment of them, by placing Nature in the order that its Creator designed it, which in the natural consequences of the thing promotes Spiritual Life, and renders us more and more fit for Christ's spiritual kingdom; and not only so, but gives to animal life pleasure and joy, that we never could have had without it.

Question. I should be glad to hear you at large upon religion giving pleasure to animal life; for it is represented as taking up our cross and following Christ?

Answer. Our Lord honestly told His disciples of their danger, and what they were to expect by being His followers, that the world would hate them, and for this reason, because they were not of the world, even as He also was not of the world; but He gives them sufficient comfort, showing that He had overcome the world: as if He had said, you must arm yourselves with a resolution to fight, for if you be resolved to be my disciples, you expose the world, by setting their folly in its true light, and therefore every one who is not brought over by your example, will hate and oppose you as it hath Me; but as it hath had no advantage against Me, and I have overcome it, if you continue the conflict, you, by My strength, shall overcome likewise; so that this declaration of our Lord cannot damp the pleasures of life when rightly considered, but rather enlarges them. The same revelation tells us, that the religious life hath the promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come; and not only by the well-regulated mind described in my last answer, as tending to give pleasure and quiet, but by a firm trust in the providence of God, and by the help of an honest calling, industriously pursued, we shall receive such a portion of the comfortable things of this life as shall be fittest for promoting our eternal interest, and that under the direction of infinite wisdom and goodness; and that we shall overcome all our difficulties by being under the protection of infinite power. These considerations cannot fail to give a relish to all the pleasures of life. Besides, the very nature of the thing giving pleasure to a mind so regular as I have already described, it must exalt the mind above those irregular

passions that jar, and are contrary one to another, and distract the mind by contrary pursuits, which is described by the Apostle with more strength in his Epistle to the Romans (chap. 1st, from verse 26 to the end) than any words I am capable of framing; especially if we take our Lord's explanation of the parable of the tares in the field as an improvement of these doctrines, as it is in Matth. xiii., from the 37 to 44 verse; and Rev. xx., from verse 11 to the end. If these Scriptures, seriously considered, can suffer any man to be easy, judge ye, and they will remain truth, whether believed or not. Whereas, on a mind regular and having the animal part under subjection to the rational, in the very nature of the thing gives uniformity of pursuits. The desires, rectified by the Word of God, must give clearness of judgment, soundness of mind, regular affections, whence will flow peace of conscience, good hope, through grace, that all our interests are under the care of our Heavenly Father. This gives a relish to animal life itself, this joy that no man intermeddleth with, and which is peculiar to a Christian or holy life; and its comforts and blessings the whole Scripture is a comment upon, especially our Lord's Sermon upon the Mount, Matth. v. 1–13, and its progress in the parable of the Sower in the xiiith of Matthew.

DR DALRYMPLE AND DR M'GILL.—In Dr Dalrymple's writings, which are expository rather than controversial, Socinianism can merely be detected by the theological critic. His works deserve study in connection with Burns, if at all, for their tone. Mildness and gentleness of character are exhibited in everything he wrote, and the reader is ever and again tempted to discover in statements such as that natural passions are not criminal, save when ill directed or ill employed, that no penitent sinners whatever are excluded from pardon, the origins of the poet's working theory of life, as well as of the theological dogmas which he held so loosely. It is unnecessary, however, to try to construct a system of divinity out of the scattered materials to be found in Dr Dalrymple's expositions. The testimony contained in the dedication to his colleague of his *History of Christ for the Use of the Unlearned*, to the 'unremitting accuracy' with which Dr M'Gill explained and applied by lectures the truths of Scripture, shows that he at least believed that he was substantially at one with his brother in regard to doctrine.

Dr M'Gill, on the other hand, was an able and (up to a certain point) bold and frank dogmatist. His *Practical Essay on the Death of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh, 1786) was fairly enough described by his chief critic, Mr Dun, minister of Auchinleck, as 'copied after Ebion, Cerinthus, and Socinus.' Though he set out with the avowed intention of calling the attention of Christians 'to what all are agreed in, rather than to those minuter and less important points in which some may differ from others,' he can hardly have been ignorant that, at all events, the theory of redemption which he propounded would probably provoke from the orthodox such criticisms as Mr Dun's. Perhaps, in one passage describing the suffering on the cross, where he spoke of Christ laying aside all appear-

ance of his divinity, he thought to disarm such charges as the minister of Auchinleck brought against him—viz., that he was attacking the doctrines which, at license and ordination, he subscribed as his creed, 'and promised to God and the Presbytery to defend and abide in.' M'Gill's theology anticipated in some degree that of Maurice. The principal doctrine of his 'Essay' is that the death of Christ derived all its efficacy from its being subservient to the plan of divine wisdom and goodness for promoting the chief happiness of man. It is thus stated: 'Upon the whole, to suffer many indignities in the world, and to die on the cross were not the chief and ultimate ends of our Saviour's mission, nor any direct ends of it at all, but only incidental calamities, which could not fail to come upon him in discharging the duties of his mission faithfully, amidst an evil and adulterous generation. The direct and immediate end of his mission was to preach the gospel of the kingdom, or reveal the Will of God; to confirm his doctrine by proper evidences; to set an example of what he taught; and, in short, to promote the salvation of sinners in the most effectual manner, whatever sufferings the doing so might bring upon him, and though it should cost his life.' Christ's reward was declared to be the power to forgive the penitent and raise the dead to eternal life, as well as to punish the ultimately disobedient; with this power He was invested in return for His obedience.

GOUDIE'S BIBLE.—*Essays on Various Important Subjects, Moral and Divine*, the work with which John Goldie contributed to the 'black mischief' which befell orthodoxy, was commonly known as 'Goudie's Bible.' Although the title says 'in three volumes,' it is probable that only the first appeared. It was originally published (price 5s. 6d.) at Glasgow in 1779; a second edition, with a London firm as publishers, being issued six years later, in conjunction with *The Gospel Recovered*. The book is made up of a large number of essays, not strung together in strict sequence, but all directed to the confuting of the practice of interpreting the Scriptures literally, which is attributed to the Originalists (Burns's Orthodox, or Old Lights). The style is vigorous, but loose in construction, and the grammar is often faulty. While upholding the necessity of revealed religion, Goldie starts with, and supports throughout, the contention that every text of Scripture must be 'brought to the infallible test, the nature and perfection of the true God: and if the literal meaning of the text will not agree therewith, it is morally certain that it consists of a figurative sense.' After some beating about the bush, the author applies his test to the subjects of divine revelation and inspiration, and argues with considerable freedom, and not a little heat—he calls the doctrines of the Literalists 'lying vanities'—that 'we are to receive and esteem revelations only according to the degree they resemble Him to whom they are ascribed for their author.' All this is, however, merely preliminary to an essay on 'Original Sin.' The broadest statement of the author's thesis is this: 'The great cause of all the moral evil that abounds in the world ariseth,

not from the effect of what they call original sin, proceeding from ordinary generation, but only from that constitution (being subject to vanity) in which Adam was created for a probationary trial, though not proof against but liable to fall.' No textual argument of the 'Originalists' is too trivial for him to refute gravely and philosophically. Thus he declaims and reasons against the doctrines that the human race was depraved through Adam's sin, that animals were likewise depraved by the same cause, that if Adam had not sinned, man would not have died, and so forth. 'The weeping of children,' a pretended proof of Original Sin, is treated as seriously as Infant Baptism. Depravity, he argues, cannot be conveyed by heredity, because sin is 'only an act of the creature, and is more metaphysical than the spirit itself, because it depends upon created spirit for its being, and not upon God.'

TAYLOR ON ORIGINAL SIN.—The title of this work is, *The Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin Proposed to Free and Candid Examination:* By John Taylor. The first edition was published in 1740. The third, dated 1750, is an 8vo volume of nearly 500 pages.

In the first part, the author starts with the admission that 'all truth necessary to salvation is revealed in the Holy Scriptures.' He immediately adds: 'As for human wisdom and knowledge, I ought to value it, in religious matters, just so much, and so far only, as it serves to unfold the mind and meaning of God in the Scriptures; in the interpretation of which we ought not to admit anything contradictory to the common sense and understanding of mankind.'

He then proceeds to say, that there are no more than five places in the Bible where the consequences of the first sin are certainly spoken of. I. Gen. ii. 17. 'But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.' He argues that the punishment here threatened is simply the loss of that life which God had lately conferred upon Adam. He remarks that there is not one word here relating to Adam's posterity. II. Gen. iii. 7-24. 'And the eyes of them both were opened,' &c. In this text the commentator sees only that, Adam having sinned, and fallen under shame, guilt, and fear, 'God graciously proposed to continue his race, to appoint his Son, the Messiah, to oppose the kingdom of the Devil, now begun by the sin of Adam, but withal subjected the man to sorrow, labour, and death.' III. 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22. 'For since by man came death, by man came also resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' 'From this place,' he says, 'we cannot conclude that any other evil or death came upon mankind in consequence of Adam's first transgression, besides that death from which mankind shall be delivered at the resurrection; whatever that death be.' IV. Rom. v. 12-19. 'Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin,' &c. The author acknowledges that this text is more difficult; but after a long and subtle argument, he arrives at this conclusion, that, 'furthermore, God in Christ hath

bestowed upon us mercy and gifts, privileges and advantages, both in this and a future world, abundantly beyond the reversing of any evils we are subject to in consequence of Adam's sin.' V. 1 Tim. ii. 14. On this text the author makes no remarks.

The second part of the work is devoted to an examination of the principal passages of Scripture which have been applied in support of the common scheme of original sin, and have not been discussed in the first part. The passages examined are those adduced as proofs for the propositions laid down in the Larger Catechism of the Westminster Assembly. After discussing the whole, he says: 'I cannot see that we have advanced one step further than where we were at the conclusion of the first part—namely, that the consequences of Adam's first transgression upon us are labour, sorrow, and mortality.' He elsewhere adds: 'And that thereupon a new dispensation, abounding with grace, was erected in a Redeemer.'

No. III.—TARBOLTON MASON LODGES.

The St James's Tarbolton Lodge, No. 178, was constituted by a charter from Kilwinning in 1771. A number of members left the St James's in 1773, and formed themselves, with some new entrants, into the St David's Lodge. A union of the two took place on the 25th June 1781, and it was agreed that the one lodge then constituted should bear the name of St David's; probably a compliment or concession designed to appease the schismatic body. Burns was admitted an apprentice in this sole Tarbolton Lodge, styled St David's, on the 4th July, and passed and raised on the 1st of October 1781, and these transactions are recorded in the books peculiar to the distinct St David's Lodge. A new disruption took place in June 1782, and the separating body then reconstituted the St James's Lodge. Burns was of this party, and thenceforward his name is found only in the books of the distinct St James's Lodge. It would therefore appear, that though entered in what was nominally the St David's Lodge, he does not properly belong to the detached lodge now bearing that name, but to the lodge distinctly called the St James's, which he has immortalised in verse.

St James's Lodge has still in keeping its minute-book containing three minutes in the poet's handwriting, and thirty signed by him as Depute Master—to which office he was elevated in July 1784. The lodge preserves also the mallet used by Burns when presiding over masonic meetings, the silver badge referred to in the 'Farewell to the Brethren of St James's Lodge, Tarbolton,' the lodge Bible, dated 1775, presented by Burns, and the holograph letter of 23d August 1787, excusing himself from attending the quarterly meeting. Mr Peter Watson, Annbank, Tarbolton, who has gone thoroughly into the matter, shows that 'Burns, who, whether living at Lochlea or Mossgiel, must have had several miles to walk in order to attend the meetings of the lodge, was most attentive to his duties.' The Grand Masters, who were drawn from the landed

gentry of the neighbourhood, and included, in Burns's time, Mr James Montgomerie of Coilsfield, Mr James Dalrymple of Orangefield, and Mr Gavin Hamilton, seldom visited the lodge, and in their absence it was the duty of the Depute Master to preside. Burns signed minutes as *D.M.* (Robt. Burness down to 1st March 1786, Robt. Burns afterwards), from 29th June 1785 to 23d May 1788, and presided at two meetings, held in October and November of the same year, on the occasion of flying visits from Ellisland. The two lodges known to have been visited by the poet in Edinburgh were St Andrews, where, on 12th January 1788, the Grand Master of Scotland gave the toast of 'Caledonia and Caledonia's Bard, Brother Burns;' and Canongate (Kilwinning) Lodge, which assumed him as a member on 1st February 1787, and is said to have made him its poet laureate. He was made a Royal Arch Mason of St Abb's Lodge, Eyemouth, on 19th May 1787, during his Border tour. As Mr Watson has pointed out, his last recorded appearance at a meeting of St James's was made on 11th November 1788. On the 27th of the following month he was assumed a member, 'being a Master *masson*' of Dumfries St Andrew's Lodge, the Secretary—obviously an inaccurate person—describing him as of 'St David's Strabolton Lodge No. 178,' instead of St James's, Tarbolton, No. 178; the number of St David's in which Burns was 'entered,' but from which he seceded, is 174. Burns attended eleven of the sixteen meetings of St Andrew's Lodge held during his stay in Dumfries, 1791-96, and was elected Senior Warden on 30th November 1792.

The following letter, addressed to Sir John Whitefoord, Bart., of Ballochmyle, is in Burns's handwriting, though not necessarily composed by him. Its date is probably the end of 1782:

'SIR—We who subscribe this are both members of St James's Lodge, Tarbolton, and one of us in the office of Warden, and as we have the honor of having you for Master of our Lodge, we hope you will excuse this freedom, as you are the proper person to whom we ought to apply. We look on our Mason Lodge to be a serious matter, both with respect to the character of Masonry itself, and likewise as it is a Charitable Society. This last, indeed, does not interest you farther than a benevolent heart is interested in the welfare of its fellow-creatures; but to us, Sir, who are of the lower orders of mankind, to have a fund in view, on which we may with certainty depend to be kept from want should we be in circumstances of distress, or old age, that is a matter of high importance.

'We are sorry to observe that our Lodge's affairs, with respect to its finances, have for a good while been in a wretched situation. We have considerable sums in bills which lye by without being paid, or put in execution, and many of our members never mind their yearly dues, or anything else belonging to our Lodge. And since the separation from St David's, we are not sure even of our existence as a Lodge. There has been a dispute before the Grand Lodge, but how decided, or if decided at all, we know not.

'For these and other reasons, we humbly beg the favor of you, as soon

as convenient, to call a meeting, and let us consider on some means to retrieve our wretched affairs.—We are, etc.'

No. IV.—GAVIN HAMILTON AND THE MAUCHLINE KIRK-SESSION.

The parochial persecution of Gavin Hamilton did not terminate with the events which provoked 'Holy Willie's Prayer.' On the 27th October (1785), the Session resolved not to erase the minutes of which he had complained, 'because he continues to give more and more offence by neglect of public ordinances, and that in disobedience to the recommendation of the reverend presbytery.'

On the 2d of August 1787, the Session is informed that Gavin Hamilton, on the last Lord's Day, caused his servant, James Brayan, to dig some potatoes in his garden. By a letter of the 8th September, Mr Hamilton makes the following explanation :—'I was walking with my children in the forenoon in the garden, when some of them petitioned for a few new potatoes, having got none that season. I considered the request as so very reasonable, particularly from those who made it, that I did not scruple to listen to their demands; nor had I an idea that raising a few potatoes in a private garden would have given offence to any person, more than pulling any garden stuff.'

In their answer, the Session express doubt of the fact of the children having had none that season, 'being informed that there were new potatoes in his house some days before that Sabbath, for proving whereof, if necessary, witnesses are named.' Some time after, they find that two and a half rows of potatoes, each row ten or eleven feet long, were dug, and that the child was employed to gather them; they therefore pass sentence, ordering Mr Hamilton to appear and answer, not for the sin of Sabbath-breaking, but 'for the guilt of contumacy.' The latter charge was pressed before the Presbytery of Ayr, and dismissed, on technical grounds. Not to be beaten, Mr Auld commenced *de novo*, summoned Mr Hamilton to answer, not merely for the potato-digging, but also for the old offence of neglecting public ordinances, and induced the Session to sentence him to profess repentance, promise amendment, and submit to a rebuke from the chair. This sentence also the presbytery reversed, merely recommending Mr Hamilton, in regard to potato-digging, 'to be more careful in not giving publick offence on the Lord's Day.' This ended the matter so far as the principal delinquent was concerned; but on the 13th January 1788, James Brayan stood a rebuke for having dug the potatoes. Further, Mr Auld demanded 'reparation' from Mr Robert Aiken (Mr Hamilton's agent in the various processes before the presbytery), for his hard speeches, and ultimately, through the intermediation of a committee of presbytery, got it in the shape of an admission that 'in the heat of his argument for a client he may have expressed himself improperly, and that he is sorry for any umbrage or offence Mr Auld may have taken at this, as he never meant to injure him.'

No. V.—THE METRES OF BURNS.

Burns took his favourite forms of verse from Ramsay and Fergusson. The peculiar stanza employed in the verses 'To a Mouse' had been largely employed by Scottish poets for comic subjects: Burns showed that it was capable of more serious use, and Wordsworth afterwards stamped it with his approbation. Fergusson, the immediate predecessor of Burns, found many poems in this stanza in the volumes of Ramsay. Ramsay found it in use with his senior contemporary, Hamilton of Gilbertfield; and Hamilton, again, had before him several poems of the same form, which had been produced before the middle of the seventeenth century by Robert Semple of Beltrees. It is curious to find at that early period burlesque elegies on the noted piper Habbie Simpson, and 'Sandy Briggs, butler to the Laird of Kilbarchan,' exactly resembling that of Burns on Tam Samson. For example, from the elegy on Briggs:

Wha 'll jaw ale on my drouthy tongue, — pour—thirsty
To cool the heat o' light and lung?
Wha 'll bid me, when the kail-bell 's rung, — dinner-bell
To board me speed?
Wha 'll set me by the barrel-bung,
Since Sandy 's dead?

Wha 'll set me dribbling by the tap?
While winking I begin to nap,
Then lay me down, and weel me hap, — well—cover
And bin' my head. — bind
I needna think to get ae drap,
Since Sandy 's dead.

Well did the master-cook and he
Wi' giff-gaff courtesies agree, — reciprocal
While tears as fast as kitchen fee — dripping
Drapt frae his head.
Alake a day! though kind to me,
Yet now he 's dead!

The stanza may be traced in slightly different forms amongst the writers of the preceding century. We find Sir Richard Maitland employing one only differing from it in the want of a line. When we go seventy years further back, we find the germ of the stanza in a peculiar group of the poems of Dunbar, where rhymed couplets were somewhat conceitedly associated with alternate rhymes. It is, however, of much more ancient origin. Ferdinand Freiligrath, in an article in the *Athenæum* of June 30, 1866, traced it back to the Troubadours, and quoted examples dating as far back as 1200.

Another of the favourite metres of Burns is that employed in his first 'Epistle to Davie'—a remarkably complicated and difficult stanza, but which the poet had so completely mastered, through his extraordinary command of language, that he would employ it in scribbling a note on

the most trivial business to a friend. This stanza was adopted by Ramsay in a poem entitled 'The Vision,' which he wrote in the style of a former age, and passed off in his *Evergreen* as an antique. Ramsay found his model in the well-known poem styled 'The Cherry and the Slae,' by Alexander Montgomery, who flourished in the reign of James VI. The stanza was used by a poet who lived before the days of Montgomery, though only, as far as is known, in one piece. This piece is 'Ane Ballat of the Creation of the World,' written by Sir Richard Maitland. As Maitland wrote this curious poem, 'to the tune of the Banks of Helicon,' we may safely assume that there was at least one previous example of the stanza. It does not occur, however, in any of the poems of Dunbar, Douglas, Henryson, or other of the early 'Makars.'

A third stanza worthy of special notice is that employed in the 'Holy Fair' and 'Ordination.' Here Burns directly imitated Fergusson's 'Leith Races' and 'Hallow Fair;' but the stanza was first brought into vogue by Ramsay, in the continuation which he wrote of 'Christ's Kirk o' the Green.' The form of the stanza was slightly altered by Ramsay, who improved it in both sound and pith. The poem 'Peebles to the Play,' is in the same stanza, with a slight difference in the termination, the characteristic phrase 'that day' being wanting. Though apparently a product of the fifteenth century, it was not published till 1785, and was probably unknown to Burns at the time when his volume was published.

No. VI.—ADDITIONAL STANZAS OF 'THE VISION.'

When contemplating his West India voyage, Burns sent Mrs Stewart of Stair a MS. volume (now dispersed) containing, besides other poems, an unabridged copy of 'The Vision.' In that copy there are twenty stanzas which did not appear in the Kilmarnock edition. Seven of these were put into the Edinburgh edition. The others are here appended:

After the eighteenth stanza of printed copies:

With secret throes I marked that earth,
That cottage, witness of my birth;
And near I saw, bold issuing forth
In youthful pride,
A Lindsay, race of noble worth,
Famed far and wide.

Where, hid behind a spreading wood,
An ancient Pict-built mansion stood,
I spied, among an angel brood,
A female pair;
Sweet shone their high maternal blood,
And father's air.*

* Sundrum.—*B.* Mr Hamilton of Sundrum was married to a sister of Colonel Montgomerie of Collsfield. The 'female pair' were Lillias and Margaret Hamilton.

An ancient tower * to memory brought
How Dettingen's bold hero fought;
Still, far from sinking into nought,
It owns a lord
Who 'far in western'† climates fought
With trusty sword.

Among the rest I well could spy
One gallant, graceful, martial boy,
The soldier sparkled in his eye,
A diamond water;
I blest that noble badge with joy
That owned me *frater*.‡

After the twentieth stanza:

Near by arose a mansion fine,§
The seat of many a muse divine;
Not rustic muses such as mine,
With holly crown'd,
But th' ancient, tuneful, laurell'd Nine,
From classic ground.

I mourn'd the card that Fortune dealt,
To see where bonie Whitefoords dwelt;‖
But other prospects made me melt,
That village near;¶
There Nature, Friendship, Love! I felt,
Fond-mingling dear!

Hail! Nature's pang, more strong than death!
Warm Friendship's glow, like kindling wrath!
Love, dearer than the parting breath
Of dying friend!
'Not even'** with life's wild devious path
Your force shall end!

The Pow'r that gave the soft alarms,
In blooming Whitefoord's rosy charms,
Still threats the tiny-feathered arms,
The barbèd dart,
While lovely Wilhelmina warms
The coldest heart.††

* Stair.—*B.*

† These words are written over the original in another hand.

‡ Captain James Montgomerie, Master of St James's Lodge, Tarbolton, to which the author has the honour to belong.—*B.*

§ Auchinleck.—*B.* The poet here pays a compliment to the Boswell family, and particularly to the biographer of Johnson.

‖ Ballochmyle. The Whitefoords were at this time parting with the property.

¶ Mauchline.

** Originally 'only.'

†† Wilhelmina Alexander, the 'Bonie Lass of Ballochmyle.'

After the twenty-first stanza:

Where Lugar leaves his moorland plaid,*
Where lately Want was idly laid,
I markèd busy, bustling Trade,
In fervid flame,
Beneath a Patroness's aid,†
Of noble name;

Wild, countless hills I could survey,
And countless flocks as wild as they;
But other scenes did charms display,
That better please,
Where polish'd manners dwelt with Gray‡
In rural ease.

Where Cessnock pours with gurgling sound,§
And Irwine, marking out the bound,
Enamour'd of the scenes around,
Slow runs his race,
A name I doubly honor'd found,‖
With knightly grace.

Brydon's brave ward, I saw him stand,¶
Fame humbly offering her hand,
And near his kinsman's rustic band,**
With one accord,
Lamenting their late blessed land
Must change its lord.

The owner of a pleasant spot,
Near sandy wilds I last did note,††
A heart too warm, a pulse too hot,
At times o'erran;
But large in every feature wrote,
Appeared, the Man.

No. VII.—SALE OF THE KILMARNOCK EDITION.

The original of John Wilson's account for the printing of the *Poems*, with a list of subscribers, or rather of persons to whom Wilson gave out copies on account of the author, was for long in the possession of Robert Cole, of 52 Upper Norton Place, London.

* Cumnock.—*B.*
† Probably Mrs Stewart herself.
‡ Mr Farquhar Gray.—*B.*
§ Auchinskieth.—*B.*
‖ Caprington.—*B.* Cunningham of Caprington, Baronet.
¶ Colonel Fullerton.—*B.* ('Fullarton' is the now generally accepted spelling.)
** Dr Fullerton.—*B.*
†† Orangefield.—*B.* Mr Dalrymple of Orangefield, near Ayr, was, as will subsequently appear, an active patron of Burns.

It gives particulars as to the disposal of 70 copies by Mr Wilson himself, at 3s. per copy. Among the names occur those of Mr W. Parker, Mr Samson (hero of the *Elegy*), Mr Ralph Sellars (a member of the Tarbolton Bachelors' Club), Mr Rankine [of Adamhill?], and Mr John Neilson (5 copies). Mr Aiken, of Ayr, gets one copy on the 31st of July—12 copies on the 5th August, 20 on the 10th, 40 on the 12th, 36 on the 14th, and 36 more on the 16th; thus nearly one-fourth of the whole impression was disposed of in a few days by this zealous friend of the author. Gilbert Burns states that Mr William Parker of Kilmarnock was a subscriber for 35 copies of the first edition of his brother's *Poems*. This is not confirmed by the present paper; but Robert Muir, another Kilmarnock friend of the poet, and one of whom he spoke after his death in the tenderest terms, obtains on the 2d August two copies, and between that and the 17th, 70 more. Perhaps Gilbert has inadvertently given Parker's name instead of Muir's.

'Mr Smith, Mauchline'—doubtless the bosom-friend of the poet—obtains on the 4th August one copy, and on the 8th, 40. Mr Hamilton on the 18th obtains 40 copies. David Sillar seems to have disposed of 14; Mr Kennedy, Dumfries House, of 20; John Logan, Esq. of Laight, of 20; Mr Walter Morton, Cumnock, of 6; Mr Niven, Maybole (the 'Willie' of the Kirkoswald schooldays), of 7; Mr Gilbert Burns, of 70; Mr M'Whinnie, of 20. Burns himself receives a copy on the 3d of August; another on the 4th; one more on the 5th.

On August 28, less than a month after the volume was ready, 599 had been disposed of, and there then remained on hand only 13.

Wilson's account for printing is as follows:

MR ROBERT BURNS,

To JOHN WILSON, *Dr.*

Aug. 28, 1786.	Printing 15 sheets at 19s.,		£14	5 0
	19 Reams 13 quires paper at 17s.,		16	4 0
	Carriage of the paper,		0	8 9
	Stitching 612 copies in blue paper at 1½d.,		4	9 3
			£35	17 0
Aug. 19.	By cash, £6 3 0			
" 28.	" " 14 13 0			
	By 70 copies, 10 10 0			
			31	6 0
			£4	11 0
	By 9 copies,		1	7 0
			£3	4 0
Oct. 6th.	By cash in full,		3	4 0

Kilmarnock, Settled the above account,

JOHN WILSON.

It will be noticed that there are two errors here. The second item should be £16, 14s. 0d.—not £16, 4s. 0d. But in the summation another

mistake of the same amount is made, so that the total of the account is correct.

Six hundred copies, at 3s. each, would produce £90; and if there were no more to be deducted from that sum than the expenses of paper, printing, and stitching, there would remain upwards of £54 as profit. The poet, however, speaks of realising only £20 by the speculation.

No. VIII.—MARY CAMPBELL.

While the popular conception of Burns's Highland Mary—a conception borne out by everything he has written about her—is that, as the late Professor Nichol of Glasgow University put it, she was the 'white rose' that 'grew up and bloomed in the midst of his passion-flowers,' it is undeniable that, in some quarters, a very different view has been taken of her character. Unverifiable village gossip of a century old calls for no attention, but suggestions put forward under the sanction of serious and careful biography cannot be passed over. In the third Aldine edition of *The Poetical Works of Robert Burns*, published in 1893 by Messrs George Bell & Sons, and edited by Mr George A. Aitken, the following statements occur in a note (Vol. I., p. xxxix.): 'It has recently been pointed out (*Burns Chronicle* for 1892) on unquestionable authority that a certain Mary Campbell was living in the parish of Dundonald in 1783, and probably earlier; was at Mauchline by April 1784; and was residing in the parish of Stair in February 1786. When it is remembered that, in 1782, Burns was living at Irvine, part of which is in the parish of Dundonald; that he afterwards maintained his acquaintance with persons in the town; that, in March 1784, he went to reside at Mossgiel, close to Mauchline; that, in July 1785, Highland Mary became nurse at Gavin Hamilton's, at Mauchline, and that, in May 1786, the parting with Highland Mary occurred in the parish of Stair, it will be seen that we have a most remarkable series of coincidences—coincidences so strong, indeed, that though absolute proof is wanting, there would seem to be a strong presumption that this Mary Campbell, to whose movements I have referred, is the same person as Highland Mary. If that be the case, there is every reason to believe that Burns first made her acquaintance while he was at Irvine.' The character of 'this Mary Campbell,' who Mr Aitken 'strongly presumes' to be the same person as 'Highland Mary,' need be no longer a mystery. It is sufficiently indicated in the following extracts from the records of the kirk-session of Dundonald parish:

'1784. *April* 25.—Mary Campbell, an unmarried woman, also appeared before the Session, and confessed she had brought forth a child in the parish of Mauchline. She was sessionally rebuked and exhorted to repentance, and being interrogate who was the father of her child

answered John Hay in Paulstone, and that she resided in this parish when the guilt was committed. The Session appointed Mr Duncan (the minister) to write John Hay of this other accusation, and to desire his answer thereto.

'1784. *May* 2.—Same day Mr Duncan reported that he had wrote John Hay and had received his answer, which was read and appointed to be insert in the Minutes—the tenor whereof follows: "Paulstone, May 1st, 1784.—Sir—yours of the 27th April I received intimats me that Mary Campbell had appeared in your Session and charged me as the father of her child. That I entirely deny as I never had anything to do with her that way. I am, Sir, your most humble servant (signed John Hay). Directed thus: The Revnd. Mr Robert Duncan, Dundonald."

'1784. *May* 9.—Same day Mary Campbell appeared before the Session, and upon hearing the Minutes of last Session read, still persisted in her accusation of John Hay as the father of her child. Being interrogate if she could aduce any presumption to fix the guilt upon him, declared she had received money from him at two different times for the maintenance of her and the child to the amount of ten shillings each time, and further declares that Mr Hay said to her that he would give her money to help up with the child, but that he would not take with it publicly; being further asked if she had any witnesses to produce to verify these assertions, answered she had none. The Session, considering the above affair, delay doing anything more about it till further light be given anent it, as it appears to them only a bare accusation.

'1786. *Feb.* 26.—The Session, understanding that the Justices of the Peace have ordained John Hay to pay four pound ster. yearly to Mary Campbell for the maintenance of the child she has laid to his charge, and as she now resides in the parish of Stair, agree to transfer the cognisance of that scandal as to her to the Kirk-session of Stair, who will please to take the said Mary Campbell under discipline for her guilt of fornication with John Hay, and absolve her therefrom according to the rules of this Church, and appoint their clerk to send a copy of their Minutes to the Revnd. Mr John Steel, Minister of Stair.*

'1787. *December* 17.—John Hay voluntarily confessed fornication with Janet Siller and Mary Campbell and also with Euphan Bowie from the New Town of Ayr, and the father of a child brought forth by each of them, and also confessed fornication with Margaret Ceurdie and Agnes M'Cletchie, formerly confessed by him. The Sess. appointed him to confess publicly any day he pleased.'

Let us see what Mr Aitken's 'strong presumption' amounts to:

(1) Burns probably knew—or knew of—Mary Campbell in Irvine in 1782. He certainly knew of her 'disgrace' in Mauchline in 1784. He could not fail to know of the revival of the 'scandal' associated with that 'disgrace' in the parish of Stair in February 1786. Yet some-

* Unfortunately, the kirk-session records of the parish of Stair and the minute-book of the Justices of Peace for Kyle relating to this period have not been recovered.

where between the middle of the following month and the middle of May, he addressed the mother, not of his, but of John Hay's child:

O sweet grows the lime and the orange,
And the apple on the pine;
But a' the charms o' the Indies
Can never equal thine.

Again

. . . . her bosom burns with honor's glow,
My faithful Highland lassie, O.

Six years later he could write of this girl, 'My Highland lassie was a warm-hearted, charming young woman as ever blessed a man with generous love.' In the light of 'strong presumption,' this portion of Burns's life would require to be rewritten thus: 'Burns's faithful Highland lassie was a warm-hearted, charming young woman who had blessed John Hay with a too generous love—as did four other girls!'

(2) According to the 'strong presumption' theory, Mrs Gavin Hamilton, who was of 'gentle' Ayrshire blood, had no objection, in July 1785, in admitting into her household as nursemaid, a young woman who, in or before April 1784, had given birth to a child in Mauchline.

(3) According to the 'strong presumption' theory, Burns, in 1786, when contemplating exile to the West Indies, and ardently desirous of marriage, in spite of his 'desertion' by Jean Armour, turned, for consolation, to a girl whose name, having figured in the kirk-session books of Mauchline and Stair, must have been notorious in the district. He, burdened with one illegitimate child, and knowing that Jean Armour would shortly give birth to another—as events turned out, to two other children of whom he was the father, contemplated going out to Jamaica to a situation worth £30 a year, and coming back to Ayrshire to marry the mother of an illegitimate child, of which he was *not* the father.

(4) According to the 'strong presumption' theory, Burns went through a solemn ceremony, evidence as to which is borne by the texts on the Bible now preserved in the Ayr Monument, with a girl who had shown her self respect by becoming the mother of a child to a Dundonald farmer!

Has not enough been said to show that the 'strong presumption' of the identity of the Mary Campbell of the Dundonald kirk-session records with 'the faithful Highland lassie' not only of generally accepted tradition, but of Burns's poetry and prose, is based on grotesque incredibility? Why not rather take the common-sense view of the matter, and assume it to be at least possible that there were more Mary Campbells than one in the parish of Mauchline at the time? Mr Aitken himself says: 'It must be added that from information obtained from Mr Lawrence Matheson of Kilwinning and the Rev. Dr Blair, it appears that Highland Mary had a first cousin who was also named Mary Campbell, and who married a man named Lusk,' &c., and then proceeds to show the improb-

ability of this second Mary Campbell being the Mary of the Dundonald kirk-session records. But it is unnecessary to hunt for this Mary among the supposed relatives of the Highland lassie. The Dundonald Mary Campbell is positively stated to have given birth to her child in Mauchline. It was—and still is—the fashion for a servant girl when 'in trouble' to go to the house of her mother, or to other relatives, for the best of all reasons, that nobody else—certainly not an employer—will give her shelter in such an unfortunate position. It becomes, then, tolerably, nay morally, certain, that the Mary of the Dundonald records was a Mauchline girl, a Lowland, not a Highland, lassie, an Ayrshire, not an Argyllshire, Campbell. This reasonable explanation of the so-called 'curious coincidence' is strengthened by the fact that a hundred years ago there was an exceptionally large number of Campbells—even for Ayrshire—in Mauchline parish and village, from the family of the Earl of Loudon, whose factor was Gavin Hamilton, down to excisemen, cotters, and labourers.

As a matter of fact, it was only some ten or eleven years ago that an antiquary, making researches in parish records, stumbled on the Mary Campbell of the Dundonald kirk-session books. Even gossip had not asserted that this Mary Campbell was the Highland lassie of Burns's prose and verse, or the nursemaid in Gavin Hamilton's house, for the simple reason, no doubt, that the two were perfectly well known to be different persons. Burns has never been accused of doing anything supremely foolish. Yet, on the 'strong presumption' theory, Burns is virtually represented as having, during his own lifetime, attempted to pass off this ex-mistress of John Hay as a pure girl, the soul of 'honour,' and *his* 'faithful Highland lassie,' and to make his readers believe that she, a Mauchline girl, 'crossed the sea' to make arrangements for 'our projected change in life,' when common talk in Mauchline, not to speak of Stair and Irvine, could have convicted him at once of a portentous and ludicrous falsehood!

Another slander upon the memory of Mary Campbell demands attention, because during the past few years it has been vaguely hinted at in several magazines, and because, in the interests of truth, it is desirable that whatever is actually on record relating to the memory of Burns should now have publicity given to it. The story is to be found in certain manuscript notes which form part of what are known as the 'Laing Manuscripts'—a collection now lying in the Edinburgh University Library.* These are believed to be the work of Joseph Train, the antiquary, and to have been communicated to Sir Walter Scott when he was contemplating a biography of Burns. They consist almost entirely of anecdotes relating to the poet which appear to have been told by his friend, John Richmond, to a 'Mr Grierson,' who seems to have been a collector of Burns gossip, manuscripts, and relics.

In one of these notes, entitled 'Highland Mary,' it is stated that Mary Campbell was a girl of loose character, who was for a time the

* It is by the courteous permission of the Library Committee of the University that I am enabled to lay the substance of these notes before the public.—*W. W.*

mistress of Captain (or Colonel) Montgomerie, a brother of the Earl of Eglinton, and had 'open and frequent' meetings with him, generally at 'a small ale-house called the "Elbow,"'* during the time that she was betrothed to Burns, and a servant in the household of Gavin Hamilton. He further stated that a number of the poet's friends, including Richmond, took him to the 'Elbow,' and that there he was convinced, by seeing Montgomerie and Mary, that there had been a meeting between them. Burns's infatuation was such, however, that he did not break off his relations with her.

According to another note, which immediately follows that on Highland Mary, Richmond informed Grierson that, one day, Clarinda 'called at their lodgings for Burns, who had gone out.' Richmond, who 'knew her well and also the nature of the intimacy which existed between her and the poet,' locked her up in the room, went out to find Burns, and, failing in his quest, returned and 'liberated the prisoner.'

It is impossible, by dates or other evidence of an equally convincing character, to prove the truth or falsehood of the Elbow ale-house story, alleged to have been communicated by John Richmond to Grierson, although it is absolutely incredible that Mr and Mrs Gavin Hamilton would have retained in their service as nursemaid a girl who was openly the mistress of Captain Montgomerie. But it is easily possible, by dates, to prove the falsehood of the equally circumstantial and scandalous story about Clarinda. Richmond is reported to have said that Clarinda called at 'their lodgings'—*i.e.*, the lodging which he and Burns shared. It is absolutely certain that Burns and Richmond shared no other lodging than the room in Baxter's Close, Lawnmarket, which the latter occupied when the poet arrived in Edinburgh in the end of 1786. It is absolutely certain that Burns did not meet Mrs M'Lehose before the 4th December 1787, and that at that time he was living in the house of Cruikshank, the High School teacher, in No. 2 (now No. 30) St James's Square. If we are compelled—as we are by facts—to disbelieve one story to the discredit of Burns, how is it possible to believe another which is not more firmly supported by what professes to be personal evidence?†

* No ale-house of this name now exists in Mauchline. But, according to tradition, the village contained a back lane called the 'Elbow' in which was a public-house kept by a sailor, nicknamed 'The Old Tar.'

† The easily demonstrated falsehood of the Clarinda slander gives the *coup de grâce* so effectually to the preceding story of Mary Campbell's immorality and Burns's infatuation and weakness, that it is almost superfluous to allude, in this connection, to the common belief that at some time in the course of 1787 Burns and Richmond had a difference which ended in their permanent estrangement. In his *Book of Robert Burns* (Edinburgh, printed for the Grampian Club, Vol. ii., 1890, pp. 167–168, Dr Charles Rogers writes: 'On the 7th of August, Burns returned to Edinburgh. His circumstances had become more prosperous, but he was willing to share the humble lodgings of his friend. But Mr Richmond had got a new companion. From this period Richmond withdrew from the poet's friendship, and the cause of his doing so has not been explained. When in his old age he was posed on the subject, he became fretful and impatient; but it was remarked he would not allow a word to be uttered in his presence to the poet's disadvantage; and he emphatically certified that when he was his room associate in the Lawnmarket he kept regular hours, and was habitually sober.'

The story of Burns's Highland Lassie is, and probably will ever remain, more or less of a mystery. *She may not have been Mary Campbell;* Lockhart and 'Christopher North' inclined to the opinion that she is to be sought for in the girl who inspired 'Mary Morison.' It is *possible* that Burns was attached to Mary Campbell before he became connected with Jean Armour—according to tradition, Mrs Begg said as much when she was questioned upon the subject—and that she was buried in the Greenock graveyard when the lair which was acquired by Peter M'Pherson was as yet Duncan Robinson's. But the Highland Mary, whether of Burns's poetry or of tradition, is *not* the Mary Campbell of the Dundonald records, still less of Joseph Train's *Histoires Scandaleuses.* She is still the dear, departed—and never to be dishonoured—shade.

THE BIBLE IN THE MONUMENT AT AYR.—Allusion has been made to the circumstances under which the Bible (in two volumes) which is believed to have been presented to Mary Campbell by Burns was recovered. The following are the details:

The Bible was, it is assumed, presented by Burns to Mary Campbell on Sunday, 14th May 1786, in a sequestered spot by the banks of the Ayr, where they met by appointment to take farewell, before she embarked for the West Highlands 'to arrange matters among her friends for our projected change in life' (meaning marriage).—(Burns, in the Notes in Johnson's *Museum,* which he wrote for Captain Riddel of Glenriddel.—CROMEK'S *Reliques,* p. 237).

The Bible bears imprint:

'Edinburgh
Printed by the Assigns of Alex. Kincaid, His Majesty's Printers,
MDCCLXXXII.'

It is in two parts, each bound (contemporary) in calf, with the edges gilt, and is in good preservation.

On the fly-leaf at front of Volume I. there still remain traces of two names—'Ro . . . t Bu . . . . .' *and* 'Mo [Ma *or* Mo] . . .' The poet's mason-mark (still perfectly distinct) follows. On the page opposite (*i.e.,* the reverse of the 'end-paper') is the inscription in the poet's autograph: 'And ye shall not swear by My Name falsely.—I am the Lord.—Levit. 19th chap.: 12th verse.' A lock of Mary's hair is attached to the 'end-paper.'

On the corresponding fly-leaf of Volume II. Burns had apparently inscribed his own name and address, 'Robert Burns (or Burness), Mossgavill,' (possibly 'Mossgavil,' certainly not 'Mossgiel'), and his mason-mark; and on the blank leaf opposite, 'Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine Oath.—Matth. 5 Ch.; 33d Verse.'

When Mary died, in October 1786, the volumes were taken care of by her mother, who survived till August 1828. Several years before that

event, she had presented the Bible to Mary's surviving sister, Anne, the wife of James Anderson, a stone-mason. 'William Anderson, a son of Anne, sailed from Greenock for New York in the month of April 1834, with the Bibles in his possession. A few days after his arrival in New York, he proceeded to Upper Canada, and settled on a lot of land in the township of Caledon, about fifty miles east of the city of Toronto, where he resided in 1840. Mr Anderson was in poor circumstances, but apart from the hope of obtaining some pecuniary aid from the sale of the Bibles, he entertained the laudable desire of seeing them placed in some fit repository. With that view he sent them to Montreal, where a subscription was opened, and the sum of £25 subscribed by the countrymen of Burns, for which sum they obtained the Bibles and the lock of Mary's hair, and at a meeting of the subscribers it was unanimously resolved that the volumes should be forwarded to the Provost of Ayr for the purpose of having them deposited in the Poet's Monument at Ayr.'

Mr Robert Weir, junior, editor and proprietor of the *Montreal Herald* acted as chairman of the Committee of Subscribers, and forwarded the Bible, with the lock of Highland Mary's hair, in a box, by the *Mohawk*, Captain Miller, bound for Glasgow, addressed to his father, Mr Robert Weir, of that city, requesting him to forward the box to the Provost of Ayr (Provost Limond), so that the Bible might be deposited in the Monument.

A letter from Mr Weir, junior, to the Provost of Ayr, dated 'Montreal, 4th November 1840,' transmitting the Bible and a document, giving the history of the Bible and of its purchase by the subscribers, and relative list of subscribers (70 in number), headed by the Honourable Peter M'Gill, then Mayor of Montreal, are deposited alongside the Bible in the Monument.

There is a Certificate alongside of the Bible, signed by the Provost and Magistrates of Ayr, and one or two other gentleman, dated December 1840, bearing 'that the Volumes had been delivered, in the presence of the parties subscribing the Certificate, by Mr Weir, senior, of Glasgow, into the hands of David Limond, Esq. of Dalblair, Provost of Ayr.' The letter from Mr Weir, Montreal, to the Provost, and the explanatory document and relative list of subscribers which accompanied the Bible should have been deposited along with the Bible in the Monument at the time they were delivered over. Why this was not done may never be known. The recovery of the letter and documents came about in this way: On 9th October 1895, Mr Robert Goudie, late Provost of Ayr, received an 'October Catalogue of Books and MSS. for Sale' from Mr William Brown, Bookseller, 26 Princes St., Edinburgh, in which the original letter and documents from Mr Weir, Montreal, to Provost Limond (transmitting the Bible) were offered for sale. Mr Goudie on the same day communicated with Mr W. H. Dunlop of Doonside, Secretary to the Burns Monument Trustees, and suggested that, if what were advertised for sale were the original letter and documents, it would be well to secure them and have them placed alongside the

Bible in the Monument. Mr Brown, bookseller, explained in a letter to Mr Dunlop, of date 15th October, that Mr Weir's letter and accompanying memoranda, with a list of subscribers' names attached (under the hand of 'J. Morton Millar,' Secy. of Committee of Subscribers), were bought by him from a son of the late James Paterson, author of *History of Ayrshire and Wigtonshire*, *Contemporaries of Burns*, and numerous other works, who was intimate with the then Provost of Ayr. Mr Dunlop then acquired the documents, along with a fac-simile of the writing of Burns upon the Bible — lithographed for the *Ayr Observer* by J. and G. Watson, Ayr.

With regard to the almost entire erasure or obliteration of Mary's name, and the partial obliteration of Burns's, two suggestions have been made. The one is that Mary, on seeing the certain approach of death, and believing herself to have been neglected by her poet-lover, wilfully erased her own name and his, by wetting the writing and drawing her fingers across it, obliterating the surnames, and both Christian names, all but the first two letters.

The second suggestion, which is supported by the assertion of Joseph Train, the antiquary and friend of Sir Walter Scott, is that a brother of Mary pasted slips of paper over the Burns signatures in the Bible. The publication of this view led, in 1892, to a fresh examination of the Bible by Mr Goudie, with these results:

'The page of Volume II. which contained the poet's signature and address has all the appearance of a slip of paper having been pasted over them and removed. It has more this appearance than of having been erased by rubbing. The erasure is not so regular as would have been effected by rubbing with a wet finger. The page had evidently got the worse of wear, and become so frail that, for its protection, a sheet of paper, lighter coloured, had to be pasted under it. The other volume, which contained Mary Campbell's name inscribed by Burns (the remains of the name, 'Ma,' having all the character of Burns's handwriting), has more the appearance of erasure by rubbing than by removal of a slip of paper pasted over it. On the whole, I am now inclined to think that there is probability for the theory of the slips of paper, especially as regards Volume II., which contained the poet's signature.'—*R. G.*

The following is the letter from Mr Robert Weir, junior, which accompanied the Bible, and is now preserved along with it in the Ayr Monument:

MONTREAL, *4th November* 1840.

'SIR—I have much pleasure in being the medium of transmitting to you the original pair of Bibles presented by our immortal national bard to Highland Mary, the object of his dearest affection, on the last occasion of their meeting in this world.

'The circumstances connected with their presentation to her, and their

subsequent history, are detailed in a document * which accompanies the Bibles, which were purchased here for twenty-five pounds, by a few of our fellow-countrymen, under peculiar circumstances; and it was the general opinion of the gentlemen who subscribed the money, that the Bibles could not be more appropriately disposed of than by depositing them in the Monument erected to the memory of Burns near Alloway Kirk, among the other relics of the departed genius.

'As Chief Magistrate of the town of Ayr, I have been requested to address you on the subject, and to request that you will have the kindness to see that the wishes of the subscribers to the Bibles are complied with.

'A lock of Highland Mary's hair is in one of the volumes of the Bibles, giving to them an additional interest.

'I send the box by the *Mohawk*, Captain Miller, bound for Glasgow, and I have requested my father, Mr Robert Weir, of that city, to forward it to you, and it will afford me pleasure to hear from you of its safe arrival. I have the honour to remain, Sir, your very obed. hble. Servt.

'ROBERT WEIR, Jr.

'*Chairman Com. of Sub. for Burns Bibles.*

'The Provost, Ayr.'

LIST OF SUBSCRIBERS TO THE FUND FOR THE PURCHASE OF HIGHLAND MARY'S BIBLE.

The Hon. Peter M'Gill, mayor.	Alexander Ferguson.
The Revd. Henry Esson.	John Auld.
James Starke.	Andrew Cowan.
Jas. B. Greenshields.	W. R. Clarke.
Jas. Morton Millar.	Rev. David Black.
John M'Gibbon.	A. Urquhart.
M. M'Culluch, M.D.	J. B. Forsyth.
William Farquhar.	Dugald Stewart.
D. R. Mack.	Robt. Paterson.
Neil M'Intosh.	G. D. Watson.
James Law.	Wm. Ritchie.
J. Gilmour.	Saml. Greenshields.
J. M'Farlane.	John Keillar.
Wm. M'Intosh.	Wm. Cormack.
J. J. Gibb.	B. Mann.
Wm. Auld.	Donald Ross.
George Starke.	F. Fraser.
Ch. Tait.	Jas. Henderson.
Andrew Easton.	Jas. Cuthbertson.

* The contents of this document, which detailed the circumstances under which the Bible had been bought from William Anderson, and which was signed by J. Morton Millar, secretary to the subscribers, have already been given.

John Black.	Robert Weir, jr.
John Smith.	D. M'Kay.
A. H. Armour.	Arch. Hume.
John Mack.	R. M'Intosh.
Joseph Ross.	Walter Millar.
John Boston.	James Millar.
Robert Morris.	Colin Russell.
Jas. Tyre.	Wm. Watson.
Jas. Scott.	Alex. Ewing.
Wm. Gunn.	Wm. Wilson.
Thos. Cringan.	R. W. Innes.
D. L. Macpherson.	Robt. Shedden.
Andrew White.	Jas. Jackson.
Ch. Lindsay.	J. C. Becket.
Donald Murray.	J. Rattray.
J. Roy.	Rob. Scott.

No. IX.—VARIATIONS IN TEXT OF POEMS.

Pages 44, 45.—'HANDSOME NELL.'

Verse 1, line 2—Aye, and = An' aye.
" " 3—virtue = honour.
" 3 " 4—a = the.

Pages 52, 53.—'O TIBBIE, I HAE SEEN THE DAY.'

In Currie's first edition (1800) the last verse reads :

There lives a lass in yonder park,
I would na gie her in her sark,
For thee wi' a' thy thousan' mark ;
Ye need na look sae high.

Page 54.—'FRAGMENT.'

Line 4—tho' = but.
" 9—hapless = helpless.
" 13—*read*, O but for kind, tho' ill-requited friends.

Pages 70, 71.—'THE LASS OF CESSNOCK BANKS.'

Verse 1, line 1—a lassie dwells = there lives a lass.
" " 3—*read*, The graces of her weel-far'd face.
" " 4— " And the glancin' of her sparklin' een.
" 2, " 1—sweeter = fresher.
" " 3—And = When.
" 3, " 3—*read*, And shoots its head above each bush.
" " 4—sparkling rogueish = glancin' sparklin'. (*This is repeated throughout the poem.*)

Verse 4, line 1—like = as.
" 5, *read*, Her looks are like the sportive lamb,
When flow'ry May adorns the scene,
That wantons round its bleating dam,
An' she 's twa glancin' sparklin' een.
" 6, line 2—climbs = shades.
" 7, " 2—gleaming = shining.
" 10, " 1—yon = the.
" 13, " 2—on = in.
" 14, " 3—'Tis = But.
" " 4—rogueish = sparklin'.

Pages 83, 84.—'MY FATHER WAS A FARMER.'

This 'wild rhapsody' is entered, under date April 1784, in the poet's first Common-place Book. There each line terminates with 'O,' thus:

My father was a farmer upon the Carrick border, O, &c.

Verse 5, line 2—moil = broil.

Pages 89–91.—'THE DEATH AND DYING WORDS OF POOR MAILIE,' &c.

Title—THE AUTHOR'S ONLY = MY AIN.
Line 2—Were = Was.
" 31—cow-milk = het milk.
" 39—great = auld.
" 47—what I winna name = ay at ridin' time.
" 59—think upo' = ever mind.

Pages 93, 94.—'JOHN BARLEYCORN—A BALLAD.'

Verse 1, line 4—Insert 'That' at beginning.
" 2, " 1—They took = They 've taen.
" 3, " 1—*read*, The Spring time it came on.
" 4, " 1— " The Summer it came on.
" 5, " 1— " The Autumn it came on.
" " 2—When = And.
" 7, " 1—They 've taen a weapon = They took a hook was.
" 10, " 1—They laid = They 've thrown.
" 11, " 3—a = the.
" 14, " 2—'Twill = And.

Pages 99, 100.—'SONG COMPOSED IN AUGUST.'

The Poet has an unfinished copy of this song (under the title 'Har'ste: a Fragment') in his first Common-place Book. That copy is as follows:

Now breezy win's and slaughtering guns
Bring Autumn's pleasant weather,
And the muircock springs on whirring wings
Amang the blooming heather.

Now waving crops, with yellow tops,
Delight the weary Farmer,
An' the moon shines bright when I rove at night,
To muse on . . .*

Verse 1, line 1—westlin = waving.
" " 3—moorcock = gor-cock.
" " 7—*omit*, And; when = as.
" 4, " 8—ev'ry = ilka.
" 5, " 2—Till = While; shine = shines.
" " 3—grasp = clasp.

Pages 100, 101.—'MY NANIE, O.'

This song also is entered in the first Common-place Book. This chorus is there given:

And O my bonny Nannie, O,
My young, my handsome Nannie, O;
Tho' I had the world all at my will,
[to]
I would give it all for Nanie, O.

Verse 1, line 3—*read*, The sun the wintry day has clos'd;
wintry = weary.
" 2, " 2—mirk = dark.
" 6, " 4—my = about.
" 7, " 1—*omit*, auld.
" " 2—*omit*, sheep an'.

Page 104.—'OF ALL THE NUMEROUS ILLS THAT HURT OUR PEACE.'

Line 4—*read*, That to our folly or our guilt we owe.

Page 110.—'EPITAPH.'

The first line of this originally stood (Common-place Book):

O ye who sympathize with virtue's pains.

But at the foot of the page on which it is entered the poet suggests as a better reading:

O ye whose hearts deceasèd merit pains.

Pages 116, 117.—'STANZAS.'

Verse 1, line 5—soul = heart.
" 2, " 2—*read*, Forgive where I so oft have gone astray.
" " 4—might = would.
" " 5—*read*, Again to passions I would fall a prey.
" " 7—should = can.

* Here a name is written in cypher. The name is supposed to be 'Jean Armour.'

Verse 2, line 9—yet = then.
" 3, " 3—nod = rod, breath.
" " 7—I feel my pow'rs to be = unfit my native powèrs be.

Page 118.—'THE FIRST SIX VERSES OF THE NINETIETH PSALM VERSIFIED.'

Verse 2, line 3—ponderous = mighty.
" 6, " 1—with = and.
" " 2—everlasting = never-ending.

Pages 124-26. — 'A POET'S WELCOME TO HIS LOVE-BEGOTTEN DAUGHTER.'

Many of the following variations are taken from a hitherto inedited MS. (of date 1787) of the poem, now in The Athenæum, Liverpool. The heading to that MS. is 'A Poet's Welcome to his bastart wean.'

Verse 1, line 2—thoughts = ought.
" " 4—bonie = sweet, wee.
" 2, " 1—Tho' now = What tho'; ca' = name.
" 3, " 3—fought = bought.
" " 4—*read*, And that right dear.
" " 5—ye 're = 'twas.
" 4, " 2—As fatherly I = I, fatherly, will.
" " 3—*transpose* dear *and* near.
" 5, " 2—no' = now.
" " 3—Sin' thou cam = Tho' ye come.
" " 5—thy = your.
" 6, " 2—braw and bienly = elegantly.
" " 5—brat = gett.
" 7, " 1—Lord = Gude.
" " 5—'Twill = 'Twad.
" 8, " 1—For = And.

Pages 126, 127.—'GREEN GROW THE RASHES.'

Verse 4, line 1—*read*, For you that 's douse, and sneers at this.
" " 3—*omit*, e'er.

Pages 129, 130.—'SONG—"NO CHURCHMAN AM I."'

Verse 7, line 4—harass'd = pressèd.

Pages 144-49.—'EPISTLE TO DAVIE [SILLAR], A BROTHER POET.'

Verse 1, line 11—*transpose* tent *and* want.
" 2, " 5—coofs = fools.
" 6, " 14—It = It 's.
" 7, " 5—*read*, Yet here I sit hae met wi' some.
" " 9—make = let.

Verse 9, line 7-10—*read*, In all my share o' care an' grief,
Which Fate has largely given,
My hope, my comfort, an' relief
Are thoughts of Her and Heaven.

Pages 158-62.—'[FIRST] EPISTLE TO J. LAPRAIK.'

Verse 3, line 5—*read*, It touch'd the feelings o' the breast.
" 4, " 1—describ'd = I pleas'd.
" " 2—*read*, The style sae tastie and genteel.
" 5, " 1—It pat me = My heart was.
" " 2—there = a'.
" " 4-6—*read*, He was a devil,
But had a kind and friendly heart,
Discreet and civil.
" 8, " 2, 3—*read*, Amaist since ever I could spell,
I 've dealt in makin' rhymes mysel.
" " 5—*read*, But crooning at a pleugh or fail.
" 10, " 3—frae = by.
" 12, " 1—*read*, A set of silly, senseless asses.
" " 4—Plain truth = Thus sae.
" " 5—syne = then.
" 14, " 3—bright = tight.
" 21, " 2—*read*, Whose hearts true generous friendship warms.

Pages 163-66.—'SECOND EPISTLE TO J. LAPRAIK.'

Verse 2, line 5—awkwart = dowie.
" 5, " 1—king = ace.
" 6, " 2—down gaed = in went.
" " 3—Quoth = Says.
" 7, " 1—*read*, But what my theme 's to be, or whether.
" 10—*Omitted in one MS.*
" 12, line 1—paughty = lordly.
" 13, " 1—O Thou = May He.
" " 3—*read*, Then though He turn me out adrift.
" 16, " 3—thoughtless = honest.
" 17, " 1—scrape, an' squeeze = grunt and scrape.
" " 2—worthless = silly.
" " 5—some = a.
" 18, " 1—*read*, Lapraik and Burness then may rise.
" " 2—To = And.

Pages 170, 171.—'EPISTLE TO JOHN GOLDIE IN KILMARNOCK.'

Verse 1, line 3—his = her.
" " 4—Girns an' = Girnin'.
" " 6—May = Wad.
" 2, " 5—great = strong.

Verse 3, line 4—Can = Will.
" " 6—*read*, Death soon will end her.
" 4—*read*, Auld Orthodoxy lang did grapple,
But now she 's got an unco ripple,
Haste, gie her name up i' the chapel,
Near / Nigh } unto death;
She how she fetches at the thrapple,
And gasps for breath.

Verse 5, line 2—*read*, Wha are to blame for this mischief.
" " 3—could = gin; get = gat.

Pages 173-76.—'THE TWA HERDS.'

Verse 1, line 2—on = in.
" 2, " 2—horn = horns.
" " 3—These = This.
" 3, " 2—raise = breed.
" " 5—ne'er gat = gat na.
" 4, " 1—whae 'er wad hae = wha wad hae e'er; wha ever wad.
" " 5—*read*, But by the very brutes eleckit.
" 5, " 5, 6—*read*, But Calvin's fountain-head they drank,
That was a feast.
" 6, " 1—thummart = fulmart.
" " 3—smell'd = knew.
" " 5—weel he lik'd = likèd weel.
" 7, " 1—What herd like = And wha like.
" " 2—thro' = o'er.
" " 5—saw gin = tell'd gif.
" 8, " 1—mangy = mangy'd.
" " 2—Or = And.
" " 3—And = Or.
" " 4—Or = And.
" " 5—Could shake = Or hing; dub = tub.
" " 6—heave = shute (shoot).
" 9, " 2—should = sae.
" " 5, 6—*read*, While new light herds will laugh and say 't
That neither 's clean.
" 10, " 1—A' ye = O ye.
" " 2—There 's = Thee.
" " 3—thou = great;
read, And chiefly gird thee, 'postle Auld.
" 11, " 5, 6—*read*, I hope frae heav'n to see them het,
Yet in a flame.
" 12, " 1—Dalrymple has been = There 's D'rymple has been;
our = a.
" " 5—That = Wha.

Verse 13, line 5—A chield wha 'll = A chap will.
" 14, " 1—a ane = mae.
" " 2—Wha fair and openly rebel.
" " 5—grey nick quill = gray-neck still.
" 15, " 3—counsel = counsels.
" " 5—get = gie.
" 16, " 1—Then = When.
" " 4—That = Wha.
" " 5—sea = seas.

Pages 177-83.—'EPISTLE TO WILLIAM SIMSON.'

Verse 6, line 2—poets = bardies.

Pages 186-89.—'HOLY WILLIE'S PRAYER.'

Verse 1, line 1—that = who; wha.
" " 2—wha = who.
" 3, " 2—such = sic.
" " 3—deserv'd = deserve; most = sic.
" " 5—Five = Sax; ere = 'fore.
" 4, " 2—*read*, Thou might hae plunged me deep in hell.
" " 3—to weep = and weep.
" " 4—lakes = lake.
" " 6—their stakes = a stake.
" 5, " 3—o' = in.
" " 5—ruler = buckler.
" 7, " 3—in = wi'.
" " 6—wi' = in.
" 9, " 1—avow = allow.
" " 6—*read*, Wad ne'er hae steer'd her.
" 10, " 2—Buffet = Beset.
" " 3—proud *and* high *transposed*.
" " 4—That = 'Cause.
" 11, " 5—their rulers = Thy rulers; Thy elders.
" " 6—public = open.
" 12, " 5—Priest = priests.
" 13, " 3—An' = As.
" 14, " 2—that = the.
" " 3—bare = bear.
" " 5—visit them = weigh it down.
" 15, " 2—flesh = saul.
" 16, " 2—them wha = him that.
" 17, " 3—*transpose* grace *and* gear.

Pages 198-200.—'TO A MOUSE.'

Verse 4, line 5—bleak = cauld.
" 5, " 1—bare = bleak.

Verse 7, line 2—may be = whyles in.
" " 4—Gang aft = Aft gang.
" 8, " 1—Still = But.

Pages 213–15.—'MAN WAS MADE TO MOURN.'

Verse 5, line 5—life = days.
" " 6—sorrows = labours.
" 6, " 2—pleasure's = fortune's.
" " 6—*read*, To wants and sorrows born.
" 7, " 1, 2—*read*, Many the ills that Nature's hand
Has woven with our frame!
" 8, " 8—offspring = children.
" 9, " 1—I 'm design'd = I am doom'd.
" " 2—law = hand.
" 10, " 5—man = heart.
" " 6—never, sure = surely ne'er.

Pages 217–23.—'THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT.'

Two MSS. of this poem, one in the British Museum, the other in the Monument at Kilmarnock, are inscribed to Robert Aitken [*sic*].

Verse 2, line 4—trains = flocks.
" 3, " 8—Does = Do; kiaugh and care = carking cares.
" 5, " 3—social = tender.
" " 8—Gars = Maks.
" 8, " 5—artless = witless.
" " 8—bashfu' = awkward.
" 9, " 1—love like this = suchen love.
" " 3—pacèd much = tracèd long.
" " 5—draught = drop.
" " 9—evening = balmy.
" 10, " 5—perjur'd = coward.
" " 6—honour *and* virtue *transposed*.
" 13, " 6—sweetest = chiefest.
" 18, " 1—all take off their = each takes off his.

Pages 223–27.—'ADDRESS TO THE DEIL.'

Verse 3, line 3—lowin heugh 's = howe, het hole 's.

Pages 231–43.—'THE JOLLY BEGGARS.'

A MS. of this in the library of the University of Edinburgh is headed 'LOVE AND LIBERTY—A CANTATA.' *The Poetical Miscellany* (Glasgow, Stewart & Meikle, 1800) has heading 'THE JOLLY BEGGARS; OR TATTERDEMALLIONS: A CANTATA.'

Pages 231, 232.—Recitativo, verse 1, line 3—*read*,
Thick load cauld Boreas blast.

Pages 231, 232.—Recitativo, verse 2, line 12—*read*,
Like onie Cadger's whip.
" Recitativo, verse 2, line 13—staggering *and* swaggering *transposed.*

Page 233.—Air, verse 1, line 3—*omit*, And.
" " " 4, " 1—What = Now.

Pages 234, 235.—Air, verse 3, line 3—*read*,
He risked the soul and I ventured the body.
" Air, verse 5, line 2—in = at.
" " " " 4—a = my.
" " " 6, " 2—And = But.
" " " " 3—But = And.

Pages 235, 236.—Recitativo (*beginning* 'Poor Merry-Andrew, in the neuk') and Air following.

These were not published until 1802, about which time it is supposed Thomas Stewart, publisher in Glasgow, obtained that portion of the MS. from John Richmond, the poet's friend, and included it in his edition of the *Poems*. All prints before that time were incomplete.

Page 237.—Recitativo, verse 1, line 1—*read*,
A pigmy scraper on a fiddle.
" 238.—Air, verse 1, line 1—ryke = reach.
" 239.—Air, verse 1, line 5—an' = I 've.
" " " " 6—noble = gallant.
" " " 2, " 1—*read*,
Despise that imp so gent and jimp.
" 240.—Recitativo, verse 2, line 3—The fiddler = A sailor.
" 242.—Recitativo, line 4—*read*, They toom'd their pouches, pawn'd their pocks; they pawn'd = an' pawn'd.
" Recitativo, line 5—They = And; fuds = backs.
" " " 6—To quench = Quenching.
" " " 8—did = does.
" " " 13—Looks = Look'd.
" 242, 243.—Air, verse 5, line 3—cant = prate.
" " " 6, lines 1, 2—Here 's to = Here is.

Pages 249–54.—'EPISTLE TO JAMES SMITH.'

Page 250.—Verse 4, lines 5, 6—*read*,
Will ye lay bye a wee whyle's time,
An' hear what 's comin'?
" 251.—Verse 11, lines 3–6—*read*,
Then top and maintop, hoist the sail,
All hands aloft,
And large, before Enjoyment's gales,
Let 's send adrift.

Page 251.—Verse 14, line 5—deluding = bewitching.

Page 252.—Verse 17, line 5—*read*, And eye the barren, hungry hut.
" 254.— " 28, " 4—rattling = ranting.

Pages 255–64.—'THE VISION.'
Verse 19, line 6—strode = stalked.
" 20, line 3—or = and.
" 21, lines 5, 6—this *and* that *transposed*.

Pages 272–76.—'SCOTCH DRINK.'
Verse 12, lines 4–6 in the first edition *read*,

Wae worth them for 't!
While healths gae round to him wha, *tight*,
Gies famous sport.

Pages 277–84.—'THE AUTHOR'S EARNEST CRY AND PRAYER.
Page 282, Postscript, verse 1, line 2—*read*,

See vines, an' wines, an' olives rise.

Pages 284–87.—'THE AULD FARMER'S NEW-YEAR MORNING SALUTATION TO HIS AULD MARE, MAGGIE.'
Page 287, last verse, lines 4–6—*read*,

An' clap thy back,
An' mind the days we 've haen thegither,
An' ca' the crack.

Pages 288–95.—'THE TWA DOGS.'
Page 289, lines 21, 22—*read*,

Till tired at last, and weary grown,
Until wi' daffin weary grown,
Upon a knowe they sat them down.

Page 292, lines 5–8—*read*,

They lay aside their private cares,
An' mind the Kirk and State affairs,
Foretell what new taxation 's comin,
An' wonder at the folk in Lon'on.

Page 293, lines 19, 20—*read* [1786 edition],

An' purge the bitter ga's an' cankers,
O' curst Venetian b——res an' ch——ncres.

Page 295, last line—some ither day = another day.

Pages 296, 297.—'TO A LOUSE.'
Verse 1, line 1—crowlin = blasted.
" " " 5—dine = feed.
" 2, " 3—a = your.
" " " 5—Gae = Swith!
" 3, " 1—Swith! = Gae.

Verse 3, line 2, 3—*transposed.*
" 4, " 3—faith = haith.
" " 5—tapmost, tow'ring = upmost, topmost.
" 6, " 3—aiblins = maybe.

Pages 298-303.—'THE ORDINATION.'

Verse 4—*read,* Come wale a text, a proper verse,
And touch it aff wi' vigour,
How Ham leugh at his father's a——,
Which made Canaan a nigger;
Or Phineas did fair Cozbie pierce
Wi' whore-abhorring rigour;
Or Zipporah wi' scaulding hearse,
Was like a bluidy teeger,
I' th' inn that day.

Verse 10, last line.—Fast, fast = Fu' fast.
" 13, line 3—demure decoys = delusive joys.
" " 6—*read,* Will clap him in the torture.

Pages 307-10.—'THE INVENTORY.'

Page 308, line 1—*read,* My horses, servants, carts and graith.
" " 6—Lan' afore = hand-afore.
" " 8—Lan' ahin = hand-ahin; weel gaun = guid, brown.
" " 13—blockhead = haverel.
" " 18—wordy = gude grey; stark gray.
" " 24—If = Gin.
" 309, " 2—*read,* Ae tram and baith the feet are broken.
" " 6—rantin' = fechtin'.
" " 13—turned = grown.
" " 14—your = my.
" " 23—Wi' = For.
" " 25—sonsie = blinking.
" " 30—gin = if.
" 310, " 7—I = I've.

Pages 332-334.—'EPISTLE TO A YOUNG FRIEND.'

Verse 2, line 6—end = view.
" " 7—views = schemes.
" 3, 4—In the MS. at Kilmarnock Monument Museum these verses are transposed.
" 3, line 5—*read,* But gen'rally, mankind are weak.
" 11, " 1—Adieu = Fareweel!

Page 338.—'AFTON WATER.'

This song is entered in the volume known as the Logan MSS., now at 'The Cottage,' under the title 'Sweet Afton—a song.' The following variation occurs in the second verse, third line—lapwing = plover.

Pages 358-366.—'THE HOLY FAIR.'

Verse 1, line 1—Upon = 'Twas on.
" 2, last line—braw = gay.
" 4, line 1—quoth I = quothie.
" " 7—gien = broke.
" last line—*read*, By night or day.
" 7, line 4—springin = spangin.
" 8, " 3—'black-bonnet' = the elder.
" " 9—Right = Fu'.
" 9, " 3—There 'Racer Jess' = Bet Barb—r there.
" " 4—Are = Sit.
" " 7—lads = brauds.
" 10, " 2—An' some upo' = An' ithers on.
" " 5—a chosen = an elect; a godly.
" " 7—at = on.
" " 8—on = at.
" 11, " 3—likes = loves.
" 12, " 1—Now a' = But now.
" " 2—silent = husht in.
" " 3—Moodie = Sawnie; speels = climbs.
" 13, " 3—wild *in* wrath = wild *wi'* wrath.
" 14, " 6—On = O'; on = of.
" 15, " 4—Are = Is.
" " 6—pagan = wicked.
" 16, " 3—*read*, For Fairy Willy Water-fit;
For sairie Willie-water-fitt.
" last line—*read*, In haste that day.
" 20, line 2—*read*, Their lowin' drouth to quench.
" " 4—toddy = punch.
" 21, " 3—echoes back-return = echo back returns.
" " 5—Highlan' = twa-edg't.
" 23, " 5—drink = yill; cogs = jugs.
" " 7—cheese *and* bread *transposed*.
" 24, " 2—Syne = Then.
Last verse, line 6—There's = An'.

Pages 369, 370.—'ON A SCOTCH BARD GONE TO THE WEST INDIES.'

Verse 2, line 5—*read*, He's canter'd tae anither shore.
" 3, " 2—*read*, An' pray kind Fortune to redress him.
" 5, " 3—mak = gar.
" 7, " 2—On = An'.
" 10, " 1—*read*, Then fare-ye-weel, my rhymin' billie.

Pages 381, 382.—'THE LASS O' BALLOCHMYLE.'

First publication of this song has hitherto been ascribed to Currie. It now appears that it was first printed in No. 18 of a series of poetical tracts, entitled *The Polyhymnia: being a Collection of Poetry*,

Original and Selected; by a Society of Gentlemen, issued (weekly) by John Murdoch, stationer and bookseller, Glasgow, during 1799. The series extended to twenty numbers of 8 pp. each. The List of Contents to the volume says that this song was 'never before published.' Several of the following variations are taken from that version, being here given for the first time. The heading in *The Polyhymnia* is followed by this note: 'Composed by Robert Burns, from the emotions of gratitude and esteem which he felt for the worthy family now living there, for the kindness and attention they had shewn him.'

Verse 1, line 7—Except = Unless.
" 3, " 1—the = a.
" " 2—*read*, And sweet a night in Harvest mild.
" " 7— " And all her other { charms / works } are foil'd.
" 4, " 1—had she been = { if / gin } she were.
" " 4—Scotland's = Scotia's.
" 5, " 1—might = may.
" " 3—*read*, Or thirst for gold, &c.
" " 4— " Or downwards dig, &c.
" " 6—the = my.
" " 7—have joys = brings joy.

Pages 397, 398.—'THE CALF.'

Verse 2, lines 1, 2—*read*, And when some patron shall be kind
To bless you—wi' a kirk.
" 3, " 1—raptur'd = mystic.
" " 2—Shall = Should.
" 4, " 1—Tho' = And; some = a.
" 5, " 1—in your lug = to conclude.
" 6, " 2—Below = Beneath.

Pages 415, 416.—'FAREWELL, THE BONIE BANKS OF AYR.'

Verse 3, line 7—these *and* those *transposed*.
" 4, " 6—peace " love "

Pages 420–28.—'THE BRIGS OF AYR.'

Page 420, line 21—his = the.
" 421, " 23—left = leaves; took = taks.
" " 24—wheel'd = wheels.
" " 28—out = forth; nor = or.
" " 29—Dungeon-clock = steeple-clock.
" 422, " 13—Rhymer = Bardie.
" 423, lines 13, 14—*Omitted in one (an early) MS.*
" line 15—*read*,
Will your auld, formless bulk o' stane and lime.

Page 424, line 8—his = its.
" " 10—his = the.
" 425, " 20, 31—*Omitted in one (an early) MS.*
" 426, " 10—*omit*, mak to.
" " 19 *et seq.*—*read*,

Nae mair down street the Council quorum waddles,
With wigs like mainsails on their lugger noddles;
No difference but whase main-mast is tallest,
All comfortably charged alike wi' leaden ballast.

Page 427, line 1—*read*,

Or gather'd liberal views in musty Bonds and Seisins.

" " 5—dull = kind; *omit*, kindly.
" " 19—struck = touched.
" 428, " 11—her = his.

END OF VOLUME I.

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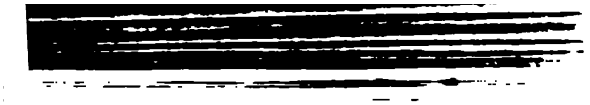

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